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THE BEQUEST OF
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LATE PROFESSOR IN THE SCHOOL

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~~one hundred~~ and fifty separate compositions. One of them extends to one hundred and seventy-six stanzas; another contains but a brace of verses. There are about two thousand five hundred verses in the whole collection. It is common to speak of the entire collection as the "Psalms of David," whereas it is probable that only seventy-three psalms—or about one-half of the collection—are from the inspired pen of the King of Israel. Twelve of the sacred songs are ascribed to Asaph, a man of exquisite delicacy of feeling, who lived during David's reign, about one thousand years before the advent of Christ. Two of them are ascribed to that universal genius, King Solomon. That "lofty and melancholy psalm," the ninetieth, which has been chanted as the funeral march of so many a departed saint, is universally held to have been written by Moses himself. It is probably the oldest of psalms, as Damascus is the oldest of cities. How magnificently this ancient lyric opens. "Lord! thou hast been the dwelling place of thy people in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God!" The authorship of sixty of the psalms is somewhat uncertain. A portion of them are ascribed to the "sons of Korah." One is attributed to the pen of Heman, another to Ethan the Ezrahite, who lived in the days of Solomon. But, however various the pens that ascribed them on the parchments, they all bear the same internal evidence of a celestial inspiration. Martin Luther styled the book of Psalms "an epitome of the Word of God—a little Bible in themselves." They have been read and sung, and studied, and prayed over for twenty-five centuries of time. The most ancient of them has been in existence for three thousand years; the latest written was composed at least 2,500 years ago. While the Illiad of Homer and the Æneid of Virgil have been enjoyed by the intellects of the learned few, yet the praise songs of David and Moses have been the heart heritage and delight of the lowliest as well as the loftiest. Scholars, statesmen and poets have all united in extolling the incomparable beauty of these songs of Zion. Lamartine in his florid French, exclaims: "The Book of Psalms is a vase of perfume broken on the steps of the temple, and shedding abroad its odors to the heart of all humanity. The little shepherd has become master of the sacred choir of the universe. A chord of his harp is to be found in all choirs, resounding forever in unison with the echoes of Horeb and Engedi. David is the psalmist of eternity: what a power

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A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

OF THE

BOOK OF PSALMS

FOR THE USE OF THE

MINISTRY AND LAITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

BY

AUGUSTUS THOLUCK, D.D., PH.D.

Translated from the German:

WITH A CAREFUL COMPARISON OF THE PSALM-TEXT WITH THE ORIGINAL TONGUES.

BY THE

REV. J. ISIDOR MOMBERT.

THY WORD IS A LAMP UNTO MY FEET, AND A LIGHT UNTO MY PATH.—Psalm cxix. 105.

PHILADELPHIA:

WILLIAM S. & ALFRED MARTIEN,

608 CHESTNUT STREET.

1858.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE fine Christian spirit and unassuming intelligence which pervade the writings of Dr. Tholuck have not only endeared him to theologians and intelligent Christians on the Continent, but secured for him a large number of admirers in this country. Almost all his exegetical writings, with the exception of this Commentary on the Psalms, have long been before the British public. Peculiar difficulties lay in the way, and deterred translators from the execution of the work. These difficulties are referred to by Dr. Tholuck himself in his Preface to this translation: it may not, however, be amiss here to advert to them in brief, so that my position as the translator of this work may from the outset be clearly understood. The text of the Psalms in the German edition is based on that of Luther, with such emendations by Dr. Tholuck as were rendered indispensably necessary by certain inaccuracies which occur in Luther's version, and other indistinct renderings which obscure the sense and connection. Every one familiar with Luther's translation knows how much it is at variance with the English authorized version; but Dr. Tholuck's Commentary is based on the former in its emendated condition. A literal translation of Tholuck's version would have rendered the valuable Commentary to a very great extent useless to English readers, whereas the substitution of the English authorized version for Tholuck's would have produced an incongruity not less fatal to the use of the work. The only way I could see to meet this difficulty was this. Tholuck's German work was intended to meet the wants of the German public: the English translation is intended to meet the wants of the British public. Tholuck based his version on Luther's, which is the popular version in Germany: in my translation I have taken the English authorised

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version, printed in parallels, as the base of operation. The principles on which I have sought to harmonize the German version with the English and Dr. Tholuck's Commentary have been the following:

First: Never to alter when the two versions corresponded in sense.

Second: Whenever the original Hebrew warranted a rendering different from that in the English authorized version, which had been adopted by Dr. Tholuck, and furnished a *new* idea, or one which the English version would not have suggested, to put it either in brackets in the text of the Psalms or in separate foot-notes.

Third: Not to undertake any alteration without having, besides the versions of Luther, Tholuck, and other eminent German versionists, diligently consulted and carefully weighed the Hebrew original, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate versions.

The version thus obtained harmonizes with that of Tholuck, resembles sufficiently the English authorized version to bring the alterations which have been undertaken into prominent relief, from the fact that the smallest divergence from the latter will at once arrest the attention of the English Bible reader, and though it does not state the detailed *steps* of criticism, furnishes its *results*. How far Dr. Tholuck, to whom a portion of the sheets have been submitted, approves of the way in which I have endeavoured to meet these difficulties, will be seen from the following passage, which occurs in his last communication to me: "I have gained the conviction from the sheets which lie before me, that you are perfectly capable of meeting, as well as it can be done, the difficulty arising from the relation of my translation to the English authorized version."

The Introduction will be found peculiarly valuable to Bible students.

The chief merits of the Commentary consist in the highly spiritual strain of its devotion, its concise and suggestive intelligence, and rich historical and illustrative character. There are many ministers who have not the time to enter into the learned and

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critical disquisitions which fill the pages of more voluminous works, while there are others who have no relish for critical treatises and contentions with Hebrew *roots*. Neither of these classes will consult Tholuck in vain. But all ministers and laymen, who wish to raise their own devotion and refresh their spirits by listening to the sweet Psalmist of Israel, will find that much of the Psalmist's holy flame has been caught by his German commentator, and that he understands to touch cords which must elicit sympathy from every Christian heart. Here is a thoroughly pious but also an intelligent Commentary on the Psalms, which I consider to belong to that kind of books wanted to raise the standard of religious instruction, and to impress the minds of the many with the fact, that religion is not insipid, and engages no less the affections than the understanding.

I have adopted a different arrangement from that of the German volume: there the Psalm-text is followed by the Introduction and the Commentary, while in the English edition the Introduction and analysis precede the Psalm-text, and the Commentary succeeds it. Ministers and students in particular, who often require the historical references and illustrative matter, or the bare outline of thought of a psalm, will find this arrangement, which presents the introductory matter separate from the exegetical, very advantageous.

The verses of the Psalm-text correspond to the verses in the German edition, which agrees with the versic division adopted in the Hebrew, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate, but often differs from that which prevails in the English authorised version, in which the titles are generally given in a separate form, whereas in the original tongues they are always counted as verses. The same remark applies also to the references to various portions of the book of Psalms.

Respecting the translation of the Commentary, I have endeavoured to follow closely the sense of the original, and having caught the German idiom, to express it in an English idiomatic form. I have done so from the conviction that a slavish adherence to the words renders many translations from the German obscure and heavy. I know, from a comparison of several English transla-

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tions with their German originals, that in very many instances the epithet "*misty*," which is so lavishly fastened upon German works, ought more appropriately to be laid to the charge of the translators, who have sometimes furnished literal translations, which to understand, however, transcends the capacity not only of English readers, but of the very authors of the works. I know German authors who, though good English Scholars, have been utterly unable to identify the English translations of their works as their own productions, and expressed their astonishment that their translations could sell.

It has been my humble endeavour to do justice to Dr. Tholuck and to the British public, but must not be considered to subscribe to all the views set forth by the author. My prayer is, that the blessing of God may attend the perusal of this Commentary in the study, the closet, and the family, and that the lofty conceptions, the humble penitence, the strong faith, and the silent resignation of the royal bard, may charm the minds and captivate the hearts of the readers, and prove as beneficial to them as the study of this work has been to me. The example of the Psalmists, who lived more than a thousand years before the advent of our Lord, who were confined to the law and the shadow of things to come, and had only dim views of the glory so clearly revealed to us in the gospel, has often put me to the blush, and tended, I trust, to deepen my convictions of sin, and to increase my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. May such be the experience of all who read this book!

I beg here thankfully to record my gratitude to Dr. Tholuck for his readiness in writing a preface to this translation, and to acknowledge the kindness and encouragement I have received from many friends while this work was in progress.

J. ISIDOR MOMBERT.

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION.

HAVING been invited by the translator of this Commentary to write a Preface to the English version, it affords me pleasure from the outset to familiarize the British public with my object in laying this Commentary before the public of my native country.

Debarred of the privilege of Christian instruction and Christian example, I shared, up to my nineteenth year, the then prevalent rationalistic views. My scientific (theological) studies did not result in my conversion to the faith of the gospel. It was brought about by the instrumentality of a noble Christian layman, who belonged to the small number of those who, under the influence of Matthias Claudius of Hamburg, and the coöperation of the brethren (*unitas fratrum*,) had in that period of universal infidelity kept alive the faith in the word of God's truth. His luminous example of a Christian walk, more than what he told me, led me to think, and assured me at least of this, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that his doctrine and example make up a complete moral ideal, which man must appropriate for the purpose of attaining to rest and finding peace. Then I believed in Christ; I was able to kneel before him and to pray to him. Then he became the friend of my soul, whom I learned to consult in all things, as I had formerly consulted my conscience. But how far remote was I at that time from the position of a doctrinally correct Christian! Only some portions of the New Testament fell in with my taste:

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these were the Gospel of John and the Epistle of James; the Old Testament, I am constrained to make the confession, I loathed, like Marcion of old. I had till that time studied the Oriental languages only. Not a long time after this, I was, without my having taken any steps to that effect, requested by the religious department of Government (*Ministerium des Cultus*) to deliver theological lectures on the Old Testament, in the place of De Wette, who had been deposed. I found myself in a great strait. I went to solicit the help of Neander.

He knew how to meet my doubts and scruples relating to Christianity, with wisdom and gentleness; but though himself a Jew, he shared, respecting the Old Testament, the universally diffused rationalistic views—with this exception, that his religious zeal prompted him to search in its pages for those religious truths which are allied to Christianity. The share of Christian feeling which entered into my faith, placed me in strong opposition to rationalism, and I held it my duty to combat in my lectures on the Old Testament also, every view advanced by the rationalistic school.

I gradually arrived at the conviction that the criticism and exegesis on the Old Testament, as set forth by the old theologians, did not in any way hold good in every instance. I endeavoured for some time, while the struggle between my *religious* and my *scientific* conscience was going on, to justify these old views only; but at last I could no longer continue blind to such a contradiction, and the thing to be done was to reconstruct in a new spirit that old theology, as in fact it had already been done with reference to the New Testament. I derived considerable aid in that task from *Calvin's Commentary on the Psalms:* it disclosed to me a religious depth in this one book of the Old Testament, which opened my eyes for many other glories of the Old Testament scriptures.

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Progressing in this knowledge, I learned to understand that the Christian Revelation is indeed a tree without a root, as long as it is not understood in its intimate connection with God's revelation of salvation in the Old Testament. My newly-prepared editions of the Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, and the Sermon on the Mount, which have recently been published, contain further proof of this fact.

I had to continually perceive that the students had no other available help in their study of the Book of Psalms than the Commentary of De Wette, which just on this Book of the Old Testament is particularly meagre in religious knowledge. The explicit and valuable Commentary of Hengstenberg had then not yet appeared, and owing to its great bulk is hardly circulated among students. Our Christian *laity* feel the want of a more intimate familiarity with the Old Testament, for which Hengstenberg's Commentary is not at all designed. In writing my Commentary on the Psalms, my object was this: *to interpret the Book of Psalms in the spirit of Calvin; and basing it on the helps derived from the newly-gained views of modern times, to adapt the volume to the wants of the people, and also to professional men, who, besides strictly grammatical Commentaries, look for a guide to the spiritual understanding of this portion of Holy Writ.*

I am hardly in a position to say whether similar wants exist in England. I must in this respect rely on the judgment of the translator. I should think that there is such a want; there are in England and Scotland many laymen especially, who are little acquainted with the Old Testament itself, or with its traditional exegesis.

The main misgiving I entertained about a translation of my Commentary on the Psalms, arose from the circumstance that my Exposition was based on Luther's version, and only then deviated

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from it when the sense rendered it unavoidably needful. The relation of my version to that of Luther is similar to that which the criticism of Wetstein and Griesbach, in the editions before Lachmann's time, sustains to the New Testament, namely, to leave Luther's version intact, even where it was not quite happy, and only then to alter when positive errors occurred. The English authorized version of the Bible, composed at a later period, and supported by a richer exegetical apparatus, is better than Luther's, as far as *the correct rendering of the sense* is concerned, although Luther's excels it in *richness of expression*. I wholly confide in the judgment of the translator to meet this difficulty in the best manner.

It is my heart's desire that this English version may prove to many English readers the means of producing an attachment for this precious Book of the Psalms like that which I formed while this volume was preparing.

DR. THOLUCK.

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PREFACE TO THE GERMAN EDITION.

Soon after the commencement of my academical course, some twenty or more years ago, I began to lecture on the Psalms. I felt at that time, and have done ever since, on re-delivering the said Lectures or on reading the Psalms, the want of a Commentary which should familiarize our cotemporaries with the religious contents of these immortal songs, as Calvin's work had done in his days. From that time I have encouraged and desired those whose special vocation I thought to lie in that direction, to execute such a work.

But my desire, which I know was also that of many others, has all this time remained ungratified. I have therefore myself undertaken the present work on the Psalms. It has been my intention to familiarize not only theologians, but the public at large, with their religious contents: the learned and linguistic investigations necessarily connected with such a work have, so far as the understanding of the text is concerned, been either received according to the results to which they have led, or been referred to in separate notes. I have written this Commentary with a view to the great boon which these songs have been for more than three thousand years to pious Jews and Christians, and with the elevating knowledge that even now there are millions of human beings, who just in the words of the Psalms express in their prayers the longings of their souls and the gratitude of their hearts to God. May it tend to give to all who lack it, the firm conviction that the Psalter comprises indeed a treasure of the most diverse and of the most holy religious experience, and that it deserves to continue, in every epoch of time, the Prayer-book of the Christian world! It is indeed true that the knowledge of the Psalmists is not in all points equal to the knowledge which flows from Christian illumination. The interpretation of the Old Testament in particular, is in

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this respect too a want, especially for the laity, to the end that they may not confound the stand-points of the different periods of the revelations of God. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the Christian Church finds in the Psalms for many of her wants an appropriate, a truly Christian, or as I should like to say, a truly *human* expression, and that they constitute, for the liturgical use of the people, and for the private devotion of individuals, a treasury, sacred by its antiquity, for which it is impossible to substitute any other.

These are the feelings with which I have undertaken this Commentary, to which the prayers which accompany them correspond. If I had known, when I began this volume, that the theologian who seems especially qualified for the execution of a work of this kind, would so soon publish a Commentary on the Psalms, I should not have published mine. I have seen the first volume of Dr. Hengstenberg's Commentary, and entertain the hope that my work, owing to its peculiar construction, will not prove superfluous, but that both works will join to meet the existing want.

I have still briefly to advert to the *critical* position I occupy in my Commentary. The authenticity of the titles has, with a few exceptions, been taken as established. I declare from the outset, that I have been far from making of this acceptation an article of faith, or from attaching to it any special religious importance. Every candid theologian will admit that, in the case of some of the titles, there may be entertained by no means unfounded misgivings respecting their authenticity. But I feel constrained to confess that the manner in which the titles have in modern times been treated, appears to me nothing short of the highest degree of critical arbitrariness. Instead of winnowing where necessary the historical traditions, supported by weighty reasons, they are now from the outset set aside, for the purpose of substituting in their place the utterances of the most unbounded subjectivity. What confidence can be placed in a criticism, the judgments of which present among themselves such powerful contradictions?* Are we not

* *E. g.* Köster and Maurer observe, ad. Psalm li. that the psalm contains nothing which contradicts its title, that David is the author, and that verses 20, 21, are an addition of a later date. Ewald, on the other hand, states that v. 20 throws the clearest historical light on the whole psalm, and that it belongs to the period *shortly after the destruction of the Temple!* Krahmer remarks, ad. Psalm xxxii. that the authorship of David *is alto-*

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entitled to the demand, that the critic—to say the very least—should look at these titles, as the Commentators of the New Testament regard the diplomatically constituted text of Lachmann, which they are bound to adhere to in all instances except those where unmistakeable external or internal reasons render a deviation from it absolutely necessary?

This is the position which I have adopted; from this point of view I have endeavoured to understand and to historically explain the Psalms, according to the hints furnished by the titles. I think that in this manner objections which had been started have in more than one instance been set aside, and that the authenticity of the titles has been verified; but even if this were not the case, it was necessary that some one should put forth the effort and make the attempt. The critics, therefore, who start with different views, cannot regard my method as blameworthy.

The translation is that of Luther, from which, however, I have deviated in those instances where the sense was incorrect or the connection dark. I fancy that I am not mistaken in thinking that the printing of the text in separate lines and paragraphs, will materially facilitate to laymen the understanding of the Psalms and their connection with the context.

A. THOLUCK.

gather to be called in question, that its tone is milder, more polished and soft, than the psalms of David; while Ewald observes, "The song is clearly ancient, thoroughly primitive, the mark of a strong mind." According to Hitzig, Psalm ii. "is one of *the latest*." Maurer refers it to the time of Hezekiah; and according to Ewald it cannot belong to a period later than the days of Solomon, *etc.*

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Das schöne Buch, das Richtscheid guter Sitten,
Die starke Kraft, den Himmel zu erbitten,
Des Lebens Trost, der Muth zum Sterben giebt,
Was *der* Held sang, den Gott durchaus geliebt,
Ward durch den Saal der ganzen Welt gesungen,
Und regte sich in aller Christen Zungen.

Opitz.

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INTRODUCTION.

SECTION I.

THE PSALTER IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS should be approached with feelings of reverence. The saints of the Jewish community and the Christian Church have, from the earliest times, found in its words the expressions of their most secret feelings. Appropriating its complaints and promises, they have struggled before God in prayer. The Psalter was the earliest prop of Christian worship. The present liturgies of most Christian churches are greatly indebted to the Book of Psalms for a large number of their sublimest sentiments, which now, at every service, in prayer ascend anew to Heaven. Piety, Jewish or Christian, if *genuine*, and not formal, has derived more nourishment from the Psalms than from any other source. The Council of Toulouse prohibited (A. D. 1229) the use of the Bible to laymen, the Book of Psalms excepted. We may account for the diligent use of the Psalms for devotional purposes, from the fact that, more than any other book of the Scriptures, they contain the effusions of subjective piety, and meet on that account in a more *immediate* manner the wants of Christian devotion. Luther says, "Other books talk much of the *works* of saints, but little of their *words*. The noble virtue and manner of the Psalter is a pattern of another kind. Its perusal is so delightful, because not only are the works of saints recounted, but the words given in which they spoke and prayed to God." In our day, the Psalms most thoroughly enter into the religious life of Christendom. They are the prayers of the Roman Catholic Mass Service, and of the Liturgy of the Church of England. In the greater portion of reformed churches they serve as spiritual songs: the Catholic priest daily prays them in his breviary, and, bound with many editions of the New Testament, they form now the book of devotion of many Protestants.

What sort of history would that be, which should record all the spiritual experiences, disclosures, and struggles, which holy men have in the course of time associated with separate passages in the

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Psalms, and should indicate their influence on the inward history of the heroes of the kingdom of God!

When our Lord instituted the holy Supper, he sung psalms with his apostles. (Matt. xxvi. 30.) He testified to his disciples that the traits of his fate were delineated in the Psalms. (Luke xxiv. 44.) He referred his opponents to a prophetic Psalm as inspired by the Holy Ghost. (Matt. xxii. 43.) The extent to which his humiliation and exaltation were, mirror-like, beheld by him in the Psalms, may be illustrated by the fact, that even on the cross, when expressing the desertion of his soul, he used not his own words, but adopted the language of his typical ancestor. (Matt. xxvii. 46.) Paul and Silas, at dead of night, praise God in psalms from the dungeon. (Acts xvi. 25.) Paul exhorts the Christian Church to sing psalms. (Col. iii. 16; Eph. v. 19.) Tertullian mentions, in the second century, that Christians were wont to sing psalms at the Agapæ, and that pious husbands and wives repeated them antiphonically, *i. e.* by alternate responses. The Psalms have, ever since the first century, formed an essential portion of Christian worship.

From some passages in the writings of Augustine and other authors, we gather that an entire psalm was sung (or partly sung and partly read) after the reading of a portion of the epistolary part of the New Testament. The order of the Psalms was adhered to. Then followed the Gospel lesson. (August. Op. vol. v. Serms. 176, 165, vol. iv.) The singing differed from the choral song of the later Roman Catholic Church. It was congregational, though the manner of its execution changed and varied. Hilary, Chrysostom, and Augustine state, that these Psalms were frequently sung by the congregation, sometimes recited by separate individuals, and repeated by the rest. The antiphonical plan was very common in the East, and since the days of Ambrose, also in the West. The congregation, divided into two choirs, alternately repeated the verses. Sometimes the precentor sung one half, and the congregation responded, as *e. g.* Psalm cxxxvi. in the words, "For his mercy endureth for ever."* We have said they were *sung:* this term must be qualified. Artistic singing, with unnatural variations and difficult notes, is altogether out of the question. According to our information on the subject, there obtained variations rising from solemn recitation to choral song. Athanasius had the Psalms (according to Augustine) recited with so slight a modulation of voice, as to resemble simple repetition: it appears to

* Both are comprised in the term "Antiphonic." The same variety in the manner of singing the Psalms obtains at present in the Roman Catholic services: a variety, not only affected by different festivals, but also by different localities. See, concerning the usages of the Romish Church, and antiquity in general, the Sections "De Antiphonis" and "De Psalmis," in Gavanti's Thesaurus Sacrorum Rituum, ed. Merati Romæ, 1788, vol. ii.

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have been something like the chanting of the Psalms in the Church of England. Many ancient Christian Churches, however, used to *sing*. (August. Conf. 10, 33. Ep. 31.) We may indeed infer from several circumstances, especially from the strophic nature of the Psalms, that the singing in the African churches was not choral, but solemn cantillation. Of this more hereafter. (See sec. ii.)

Some Psalms answered particular ends. From the earliest times, *e. g.* Psalm li. was called, *par excellence*, *The* Penitential Psalm: an epithet which, since the days of Origen, became attached to seven psalms, (Psalms vi. xxxii. xxxviii. li. cii. cxxx. cxlii.), reference being made to the Old Testament, where a seven-fold sprinkling took place at the purification of lepers, and Naaman the Syrian was ordered to wash seven times in Jordan. The morning service opened with Psalm lxiii., the evening with Psalm cxli.: during Passion-week, Psalm xxii. *etc.* In the formation of the services of the Romish Church, the Psalter was introduced into the Mass. The oldest Mass books consisted of three parts: the *sacramentarium*, containing the prayers of the officiating priest; the *lectionarium*, containing portions of the Scriptures; and the *antiphonarium*, containing the Psalms and antiphonies, or verses from the Psalms and the Prophets, which served as the *introitus*, and was so called from the antiphonic method of singing. The *graduale* of the Mass reminds us of the place which the Psalms occupied in the ancient service. That psalm which was sung before the reading of the Gospel, was called *Responsorium graduale*, because two choristers intonated it from an elevated place, (the steps of the *ambon*,) when it was taken up by the congregation. The Psalms are so distributed in the Liturgy of the Church of England, that in the daily liturgical service, according to her original institutions, the whole Psalter is prayed once a month: the antiphonic method obtains, priest and people alternating in the recitation of the single verses. The use of the Psalms was, however, not confined to public service. After the Jewish precedent of the three hours for prayer (Dan. vi. 10; cf. Psalms lv. xviii. lix. xvii.) it was deemed right at certain hours of the day to give verbal expression to the silent prayer, which ought to animate the spiritual life of every Christian. The words of the Psalms furnished that expression. The monks of the East used, in the eighth century, to pray three psalms at each of the said three prayer hours. The *seven* canonical prayer hours of the Romish Church were even then developing themselves,* reference being made to Ps. cxix. 164,

* Jerome writes to a mother, whom he furnishes with counsel for her daughter (Ep. 107. ad Lætam:) "Præponatur ei probæ fidei et morum et pudicitiæ virgo veterana, quæ illam doceat et assuescat exemplo ad orationes et *Psalmos* noctu consurgere: *mane* hymnos cantare, *tertia*, *sexta*, *nona* hora stare in acie quasi bellatricem Christi, accensaque lucernula reddere sacrificium *vespertinum*." Here are mentioned *five* hours for prayer.

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"*Seven times* a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments." These seven hours are the *matutina* before sunrise, when songs of praise were prayed (*laudes:*) the *first* after sunrise, the *third* between sunrise and noon, the *sixth* at noon, the *ninth* between noon and sunset, the *vespers* in the evening, and the *completorium* at the close of day before retiring to rest. The Psalms occupy an important position in the prayers, lessons, and hymns, arranged according to the different hours of the day and seasons of the year, since they are prayed through once a week

The Psalms exerted a third influence on the expressions of Christian piety and Christian worship in particular, since *Christian song* was formed with them and after their model. They are referred to (Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16,) in connection with *spiritual songs*, which latter are to be apprehended as songs *suddenly inspired by the Holy Spirit* (αὐτοσχεδιάσματα.) It appears from 1 Cor. xiv. 26, that at that time the Spirit of God raised also in this respect extraordinary powers in the Church. That influence of the Spirit appears to have so powerfully existed in the Church of the second century, that Tertullian, writing of his own times, records it as the prevailing custom after the love-feast to invite any one present according to their several capacity to sing songs to God, which were either taken from the Scriptures or suggested to the mind of the individual. (Apolog. c. 39.) It is evident that the former are psalms, the latter spontaneous lyrical effusions no doubt developed by them.* "The simplicity which characterizes the composition of the Psalms," says Herder, (for nothing can be more simple than the parallelism of the Psalms—which is, as it were, a double choir—alternately asking and responding, exhorting and confirming,) "rendered its possession to simple-minded Christian communities in times of oppression no less than in seasons of hope and joy the very boon of Heaven. Hence its early use in the Christian Church; hence from the earliest times, before Christian poets could exist, those loud hymns, which caused the Romans to notice their meetings; they were psalms." Even the New Testament contains imitations of the Psalms, if we may designate as *Christian*† the songs of Zacharias, of Mary, and of the angels at the birth of our Lord. The most ancient strictly Christian songs appear to have been hymns celebrating the praises of Christ, as 1 Tim. iii. 16. The pagan procurator, Pliny, writes to Trajan, (about 100, A. D.) that the Christians were in the habit of meeting on a certain day *before* sunrise, singing hymns to the praise of Christ as God. Caius, (Euseb. Eccles. Hist. v. 28.) a Christian

* With this view coincides Bsehr.—The Christian poets and historians of Rome, p. 4.

† So 1 Tim. iii. 16; Eph. v. 14, are held to be fragments of early Christian songs.

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author of the second century, says, "How many psalms and odes of the brethren have we got, composed from the beginning by believers, in which Christ is celebrated as God!" This class of hymns found its type in the psalms of praise. Others, based upon the psalms of the New Testament, as mentioned above, reverted mediately to the Old Testament. Sometimes Christian song was the mere echo of the Psalms, as appears from several preserved fragments of spiritual songs, used in the ancient Greek Church. An influence from another quarter originated about the fourth century. The form of classical songs began to be imitated in Western Europe, which gave rise to *hymns** in the narrow sense of the word. They, however, were less frequently used by the people, and rather occasioned the introduction of the strictly musical, *i. e.*, artistic sacred song. We are entirely indebted to the Psalms as models, not only for hymns sung by the people, but for choral songs in general.

Luther, in particular, has composed many hymns after the Psalms: "Lord, look down from heaven," ("*Ach Gott vom Himmel sieh darein,*") after Ps. xii.: "The Lord be merciful to us," ("*Es wolle Gott uns gnaedig sein,*") after Ps. lxvii.: "Were God not with us at this time," ("*Waer' Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit,*") after Ps. cxxiv.: "Out of deep sorrow I cry to Thee," ("*Aus tiefer Noth schrei ich zu Dir,*") after Ps. cxxx. The majestic hymn, "Now praise the Lord, my soul," ("*Nun lob' meine Seele den Herrn,*") by John Gramann, is composed after Ps. ciii.: "My hope doth stand in God alone," ("*Allein zu Gott mein' Hoffnung steht,*") by Lobwasser, after Psalm xxxvii. *etc.*† The gift of song, aroused by Luther's example, flows after the Reformation in the Lutheran Church, in pure and copious streams, reflecting the free effusions of the Christian mind. The Reformed Church, on the other hand, adhering in her songs more closely to the letter of the Scriptures, arranged the Psalms metrically for her service, though of course an arrangement of this kind presents less vivacity and freshness than free song. The French, Swiss, Dutch, and Anglican Churches use this metrical version. Lobwasser composed a translation from the French, for the use of the German churches.

A long chain of testimonies may be adduced to show the influence of the Psalms on the Christian life of great men. Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, in the fourth century, says, "They appear to me a mirror of the soul of every one who sings them; they enable him to perceive his own emotions, and to express them in the words of the Psalms. He who hears them read receives them as if they were spoken for him. Conscience-struck, he will

* *Carmina*, as distinguished from *Cantica*.

† A more detailed account and proof may be found, in a work of rare investigation and exquisite learning, which we have frequently consulted: Ferdinand Wolf on the Lais, Sequences, and Obsequies. Heidelberg, 1841.

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either humbly repent, or hearing how the trust of believers was rewarded by God, rejoice as if his mercy were promised to him in particular, and begin to thank God. Yes, in its pages you find portrayed man's whole life, the emotions of his soul and the frames of his mind. We cannot conceive of anything richer than the Book of Psalms. If you need penitence, if anguish or temptation have befallen you, if you have escaped persecution and oppression, or are immersed in deep affliction, concerning each and all you may find instruction, and state it to God in the words of the Psalter!" Let us add Ambrose, the pious bishop of Milan, in the fourth century: "The law instructs, history informs, prophecy predicts, correction censures, and morals exhort. In the Book of Psalms you find the fruit of all these, as well as a remedy for the salvation of the soul. The Psalter deserves to be called, the praise of God the glory of man, the voice of the Church, and the most beneficial confession of faith. The Psalms teach me to avoid sin, and to *unlearn* my being *ashamed* of repentance. Such a king, such a prophet, teaches me by his example to make atonement for past transgression and to avoid sin for the future. In the Psalms, delight and instruction vie with one another: we sing for enjoyment, and read for instruction." Augustine relates with deep feeling, in his Confessions, what a treasure the Psalms were to him at the time of his conversion: "How did I then," says he in addressing God, "converse with thee, when I read the Psalms of David, those songs full of faith, those accents which exclude all pride! How did I address thee in those Psalms; how did they kindle my love to thee; how did they animate me if possible to read them out to the whole world as a protest against the pride of the human race. And yet they *are* sung in the whole world, 'nothing is hid from their heat.'* How violent was my indignation against the Manichæans (the heretical sect, who entirely rejected the Old Testament,) and yet felt pity for their not knowing those holy riches, those remedies, and their raging against the antidote that might have healed them. I wish they had been at my side—yet without my knowledge—beheld my countenance and heard my voice, when I read the fourth Psalm—what a blessing it was to me! Oh, that they could have heard—but without my knowledge of their being within hearing (lest they should fancy I were speaking for their sakes,)—what I said to thee at the occasion of those words." He then states with profound emotion, what passed in his soul at the reading of every separate verse of that Psalm.

To unite ancient with modern days, let us hear how an intimate disciple of St. Bernard, in the twelfth century, represents the Psalter as the mirror of Christian virtue. "Be ready to do every good, but be equally ready to bear any evil, that thy mouth with-

* A beautiful allusion to Psalm xix. 7.

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out being reproved by thine heart may sing with David, (Opp. vol. ii. S. Bernardi. p. 934,) 'My heart is prepared, my God, my heart is prepared,' (Ps. lvii. 8.)—(the German version renders the word, 'fixed,' of the English A. V. by 'prepared,' cf. margin)—prepared by Thine aid to perform the good, but also prepared to suffer evil; and prepared to suffer because 'I will sing and give praise,' *i. e.* bless and praise Thee for both. And forthwith the godly man stirs himself by saying, 'Awake psaltery and harp,' *i. e.* my heart and my flesh, to glory in the living God; the heart for His mercies, the flesh for its sufferings. So David elsewhere shows his resignation to God, by saying, 'I will keep thy precepts;' and more than this, he said also, 'I was not moved, when opposition arose and persecution raged. At the persecution of my rival, the cursing of my servant (Shimei,) the murderous designs of my son, I became not moved, but obeyed Thy commandments, requited good for evil to those who returned evil for good. I was anxious for the welfare and sorry for the death of my persecutors. I could brook to be despised by my servant, but not bear to be avenged by my friends.' Behold long *before* the Gospel the virtue of the Gospel. Thus prepared, David went to meet his Lord with childlike confidence. 'I have run without a false step, and corrected the perverse as many as I could.' Come, then, Lord, and meet me, who run to meet Thee. And as I cannot attain unto thy loftiness, except thou condescend to give me thy right hand, 'Try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting; *i. e.* to Christ who is the way *in* which, and eternity *to* which we are going."

The words of Luther's pregnant Preface to the Psalter are well known: we make from it the following extract: "The human heart is like a vessel in a tempestuous sea, tossed to and fro by the storms from the four quarters of the world. Fear and care of future mishap are roaring here; grief and sadness on account of present evil there. Hope and courage respecting future happiness are blowing here; while assurance and joy on account of present good are sounding there. Such tempests teach one to be in earnest now to open, and now to pour out one's heart. He who is in fear and trouble talks in other strains about mishap than he who lives in joy; and he who lives in joy in other strains about joy than he who lives in fear. It comes not from the heart (they say) when a sad one tries to laugh and a glad one to weep; *i. e.* his heart is neither opened nor poured out. But what do you find most in the Psalms? Earnest speech in all manner of tempests. Where can you find more appropriate expressions of joy than in the Psalms of praise and thanksgiving? You look right into the heart of saints, as into fair and pleasant gardens or heaven itself, and behold beautiful, laughing, and delicate flowers of all manner

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of fair and joyous thoughts towards God and his love springing lustily into life. Again, where can you find more profound, plaintive, and wretched words of grief than in the Psalms of complaint? Once more, you look into the heart of saints as into death or hell. How gloomy and dark their mournful visions of God! So again, when the Psalms speak of fear and hope, they abound in words so significant, that no painter could thus portray, no Cicero nor orator thus describe them."

Let us now hear Calvin. In the Preface of his Exposition of the Psalms, he mentions with holy earnestness the blessing he himself had derived from being engaged in that work, and the aid with which his own experience, both temporal and spiritual, furnished him in the Exposition of the Psalms of the Bible. But let him speak for himself. "If the reading of my Commentaries yield to the Church of God as much blessing as their preparation has conferred upon me, I shall never repent having undertaken the task." "Should the labour bestowed on this work prove a blessing to my readers, may they know, that the experience of such struggles and difficulties (though unimportant in itself,) through which it has pleased the Lord to take me, has materially helped me, not only to apply in its place whatever useful knowledge I might possess, but to enter more thoroughly into the author's design and the purpose of the Psalms." Calvin, who may be truly said to have, probably more than any other man, imbibed the spirit of the Psalms, says concerning their contents: "Not without good grounds am I wont to call this book an anatomy of all parts of the soul, since no one can experience emotions, whose portrait he could not behold reflected in its mirror. Yes, the Holy Spirit has there depicted in the most vivid manner every species of pain, affliction, fear, doubt, hope, care, anxiety, and turbulent emotion, through which the hearts of men are chased. Other portions of the Scriptures contain commandments, whose transmission the Lord enjoined upon his servants; but in the Psalms, the Prophets communing with God and uncovering their inmost feelings, call and urge every reader to self-examination to such a degree, that of the numerous infirmities to which we are liable, and of the many failings which oppress us, not one remains concealed. How great and rare again for the human heart to be thus driven out of all its hiding-places, liberated from hypocrisy (that most fearful of vices,) and exposed to the light. Lastly, if calling on God is the surest means of our salvation—if better and more reliable directions for it than those contained in the Book of Psalms are not to be obtained, then every one who reads this book has attained to an essential part of the Divine doctrine. Earnest prayer originates in our sense of need; afterwards in our faith in the Divine promises. The reader of the Psalms finds himself both aroused to feel his misery, and exhorted to seek for its remedy. The Psalter unfolds every encouragement

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to prayer. It is not merely confined to promises, but men are introduced who, on the one hand invited by God, and on the other hindered by the flesh, take courage in prayer: if therefore we are beset by doubt and scruple, here we may learn to combat, till the disenthralled spirit rises anew to God. And more than this, we may learn prayerfully to struggle through hesitation, fear, and faint-heartedness, till comfort be attained. For, be it remembered, that though unbelief keep the door shut to our prayers, we must not desist when our wavering hearts are being tossed to and fro, but persevere until faith mounts victoriously from her struggles. Again, the Psalms inspire us with the most desirable of all things, in not only teaching us to approach God in confidence, but to openly unbare before him all those failings which a false sense of shame otherwise forbids us to own. They furnish, moreover, the clearest directions how we may render to God that sacrifice of praise which he declares as most acceptable to him. You cannot read anywhere more glorious praises of God's peculiar grace towards his Church or of his works; you cannot find anywhere such an enumeration of man's deliverances or praises for the glorious proofs of his fatherly care for us, or a more perfect representation to praise him becomingly, or more fervent exhortations to the discharge of that holy duty. But however rich the book may prove in all these respects to fit us for a holy, pious and just life, its *chief* lesson is how we are to *bear the cross*, and to give the true evidence of our obedience, by parting with our affections, to submit ourselves to God, to suffer our lives to be entirely guided by his will, so that the bitterest trial, because he sends it, seems sweet to us.. Finally, not only is the goodness of God praised in general terms to secure our perfect resignation to him, and to expect his aid in every time of need, but the free forgiveness of our sins, which alone can effect our *peace of conscience* and reconciliation to God, are in particular so strongly recommended, that there is nothing wanting to the knowledge of eternal life."

Some, probably influenced by their antipathy for the *matter* of the Psalms, find it difficult to get reconciled to their *form*, and feel disposed to call the *poetic* claim of the Psalms, which is by no means their highest claim, into question. Men of that stamp have never been wanting. To their shame, we adduce an evidence in favour of the Psalms which an eminent scholar of classical antiquity, Henry Stephanus, furnishes in the preface of his Commentary on the Psalms.* He states his having met at Rome with some who, from a one-sided attachment to classical lore, denied the poetic merit of the Psalms, and charged the poet Antonius Flaminius with the folly of attempting to reproduce in

* Liber Psalmorum Davidis cum Cathol. Exposit. Ecclesiastica. Paris, 1562.

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Roman verse the contents of the Psalter, which, said they, was nothing else than "committing seed to the arid sand." The learned Stephanus further states that, on adducing several illustrations, especially Psalm civ., he showed them that, "so far from questioning the poetry of the Psalms of David, there existed no production which could be conceived more *poetical, harmonious*, and *heart-stirring*, and mostly more *ecstatic*, than just the Psalms;* that Flaminius, therefore, had not selected an unfruitful subject, but was simply incompetent for the performance of the task."

A passage taken from A. H. Franke's Devotional Exposition of the Psalms, (Halle, 1731, 2 vols.) may form the transition from the Reformation to our times. He says, (vol. i., p. 904) "Where that is found, such Psalms are rightly understood. The man who has not the Spirit of Christ, nor denies himself, nor daily takes up his cross and follows Christ, has no relish for the Psalms. They gladden not his heart, but appear to him like withered straw—altogether stale. But let him be brought into similar courses of affliction and suffering, and experience the sneers and mockery of the world for righteousness' and Christ's sake—let him find out the difficulty of the task to surmount every obstacle from within and from without, and yet serve the Lord God in spirit and in truth—and he will learn that David's heart underwent other struggles besides those which sprung from his external relations. He will mark in his daily warfare the same enmity which God has appointed to take place between Christ and Belial, and between the followers of Christ and the followers of Satan, and find that struggle expressed in the Psalms; as the very first, in fact, states it: 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.' He, then, who is resolved to deny himself, to part with the world, her pomp and riches, and the favour of man, to take the word of God for his sole guide, and carry a peaceful conscience to his dying bed, will experience the intensity of the struggle which is required, and learn rightly to understand the Psalms."

As belonging to modern times, the words of a celebrated politician, John Jacob Moser, (1785) equally renowned as a statesman, and experienced as a Christian, are worthy of special notice. He had been engaged in severe struggles for the rights of

* Prolatis deinde aliquot exemplis, addebam, tantum abesse ut Davidici Psalmi nihil cum poesi commune habere putarem, ut contra nihil illis esse ποιητικώτερον, nihil esse μουσικώτερον, nihil esse γοργότερον, nihil denique plerisque in locis διθυραμβικώτερον aut esse aut fingi posse existimarem. —Melanchthon, who has written a somewhat poor Commentary on the Psalms, quoted by A. H. Franke, says, "Hic liber elegantissimus est in toto mundo!"

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his country, and had been on that account unlawfully imprisoned by his sovereign for a period of five years, during which the Bible and hymn book were his sole companions. The Psalms made him understand his position. In harmony with the voices of every century he says,* "Those who have never experienced great and continuous distress of body and of mind, neither understand the Psalms nor know how to use them. Thus I found it for many years. I fancied that I understood the words, but they were to me a sealed book. For a long time I would not read them at all. Its cries out of the depths, its enormous complaints, though regarding them not as mere poetry, I considered exaggerated hypochondriac sentiments; and my feelings thoroughly revolted at David's desire to be revenged upon his enemies. Single verses, in particular cases, sometimes instructed, comforted, and exhorted me. The treasure of experience, lucid wisdom, profoundly intimate and extensive knowledge of the human heart, contained in them; what was meant by faithfulness to oneself—by strict and honest examination of the most secret questions of the soul—by confidence in God, his omnipotence, and love—by attachment to him in doubt and hesitancy—by looking up to his Father's heart with the deepest sense of personal unworthiness; what was meant by the anchorage of faith in raging storms—by the '*Aber doch*,' of which Luther has so much to say—by the words, '*I nothing*, but Thou Omnipresent, Eternal One, *in*, *with*, *over* us all;' what was meant by the consciousness of Thy gracious call; what was the state of mind described in the words—

'Although my heart say *No* to me,
Thy word shall be more sure to me,'—

that a fainting soul should be refreshed, revived, and elevated by the smallest ray of hope—that she might rise from the dust, and still in the dust believe herself to be God's creature—that in the prospect of impending peril and sinking she might still cling to him; what it was, *in articulo mortis*, to say—

'I live and die, Lord Christ, to thee,
In death and life belong to thee,'—

that the omnipotent, quickening Spirit should govern to the end of the world the entire Church of believers—that there is but one God, one truth, one way, one faith, one experience, one '*Spiritus Rector*,' throughout all times and generations; how much these things contribute to establish and confirm the heart in the truth—to inspire confident courage in every kind of trouble and consciousness of individual unworthiness—to gain spiritual strength—to judge correctly of the connection between good and evil in the world—to produce a firm and sure step in the path of life; how

* Doctor Leidemit. Frankfort, 1783.

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far they contribute to the enjoyment of our earthly existence—of a calm, refreshing, and joyous prospect of our transition into the kingdom; with how much assurance we may link ourselves to the gigantic chain of the experience of thousands of years, and with tears of ecstatic joy glory even now in the hope of recounting them with David and all the saints, and of blending our voices with the harmony of praise and adoration throughout a blissful eternity; what lies involved in so many other feelings of ineffable delight to our hearts, though too spiritual to be expressed:—all this gradually dawned upon me, and caused me to thank God for the Psalms when I found myself in great tribulation, anguish, and temptation, both from within and without. Oh, how precious and dear was then the possession of the Psalms; how much comfort, light, and strength have they imparted to my fainting soul. I often not only missed the way, but lost the very trace of it. I sat me down as if I had become petrified. One word from the Psalms was a sunbeam to me; like a lark, I settled on the pinions of that eagle; carried by her, I scaled the rock, and beheld from that eminence the world, with *its* cares and *mine*, stretched out *beneath me;* I acquired to think, infer, mourn, pray, wait, hope, and speak in the spirit of David—'I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast humbled me.' I acquired to know and understand the rights of God—his purposes of love and faithfulness to every man, but especially to myself—his mighty wisdom towards us his creatures in our present state of probation, as well as the blessedness, benefit, and necessity of sufferings for our cleansing, purification, and perfection. I learned to esteem myself happy in being *permitted* to endure suffering. I attained to a better knowledge of the wisdom and love of God, the truth of his word and assurance, the unalterable faithfulness of his promises, the riches of his mercy and long-suffering; of my own dependence, insufficiency, nothingness, and inability without him, of the wickedness and deceit of my heart, of the world, of men, and of the profound wisdom of God in the blending of evil with good. I became less in my own sight, more suffering and affectionate, more sparing and forgiving, more severe with myself, more lenient to others. I learned to trust God in all my ways, and to renounce the claims of fame, honour, and comfort. It was nourishment to my soul to be *enabled* to say—'Lord, let me possess but Thee.' I asked for no more aid in temporal concerns than his wisdom might find good for the best of my soul. I learned to become more contented in my desires, more moderate in my enjoyments. I was enabled with tears to express my gratitude for mercies, which formerly I counted not as blessings, but as my right and due. If my soul would keep *holyday*, the Psalms became my temple and my altar. Next to the writings of the New Testament, they are now to me my dearest and most precious book—the golden mirror, the

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cyclopædia of the most blessed and fruitful knowledge and experience of my life; to thoroughly understand them will be the occupation of eternity, and our second life will form their commentary."

Though our days are not rich in testimonies of this kind, they are by no means wanting—nay, they are not wanting on the part of those lofty minds, whom our nation counts among her classics. Prominent amongst these is Herder, of whose manifold statements, setting forth the value of the Psalms, we insert here but one expression, which recommends itself both by its freedom and truthfulness. "The use of the Psalms became the blessing of humanity, not only on account of their *contents*, but also on account of their *form*. Just as no lyric poet among the Greeks and the Romans furnished such a mass of doctrine, consolation, and instruction, so there is hardly anywhere to be found so rich a variety of tone in every species of song as here. *For two thousand years have the Psalms frequently and differently been translated and imitated, and still there are many new formations of their much-embracing and rich manner possible. They are flowers, which change their appearance in every time and in every soil—but always bloom in the beauty of youth.* Just because the Psalter contains the simplest lyrical expressions of the most diversified feelings—it is *the hymn-book for all times.*"*

Herder's observations in his "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry," concerning the Psalms as a whole, and particular classes of them, contain many excellent hints for expositors. Andrew Cramer, who as a poet ranks among our classics, and as a preacher stands as a model for all times, has in a yet higher degree merited of the interpretation of the Psalms. The treatises which accompany his Translation of the Psalms† are so many testimonies of their religious and poetic value. To the testimony of Cramer, we string that of Stolberg, in his Treatise on the Psalms, contained in vol. iii. of his *History of Religion*. John Mueller, the historian, has many beautiful sayings on the spirit and influence of the Psalms. Writing to his brother, he says:—"David yields me every day the most delightful hour. There is nothing Greek, nothing Roman, nothing in the West, nor in the land towards midnight, to equal David, when the God of Israel chose to praise him higher than the gods of the nations. The utterance of his mind sinks deep into the heart, and *never in my life, never have I thus seen God.*" "The Psalms," he says elsewhere, "teach one to

* Treatises and Letters on the Belles Lettres. Works, vol. xvi. p. 17.

† Poetical Translation of the Psalms, with Treatises. Leipsic, 1759. It must not be confounded with the Lyrical Translation of the Psalms, by Joseph Anthony Cramer. Hildesheim, 1787. This work of a Catholic author has no value.

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prise a much tried life."* Even Lichtenberg, though not exactly a man who would suffer his mind to be captivated by his feelings, expresses himself with earnestness and warmth concerning the moral and religious tendency of the Psalms.† Songs, which like the Psalms have thus stood the test of *three thousand* years, contain a germ for *eternity*.

SECTION II.

OF THE FORM, DIVISION, DESIGN, AND USE OF THE PSALTER IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES.

THE poetry of the Old Testament is of a twofold kind. It embraces *Lyric songs*, which originally streamed forth as the emotions of the heart for the personal gratification of the singer, and *Didactic poems*, which were composed with a view to others, and were on that account aided by reflection. The latter are either brief sentences, as the Proverbs of Solomon, or more extensive poems, as the Book of Job, which possesses however a lyrical character, because it describes the personal struggles of its author. The lyric songs of the Old Testament, with one exception, (2 Sam. i. 19,) are all of a religious kind, and go by the term of "Psalms," *i. e. songs sung with musical accompaniment.* Such songs were offered to the Lord when he led Israel out of Egypt. The people sang the song of deliverance, and Miriam and the women, singing and playing the timbrel, repeated the first verse. (Exod. xv. 20, 21.) Psalm xc. is a psalm of Moses. The song of Deborah is another ancient psalm. (Judges v.) The prophets of Samuel's school used to sing, (1 Sam. xix. 20, 21;)‡ but above all, David united from his earliest youth the art of singing with that of playing the harp, and practised daily, (1 Sam. xviii. 10.) The instrument which he used was the harp or guitar; he played it with his hand, (1 Sam. xvi. 23; xviii. 10.) His beautiful funeral ditty on the death of Jonathan shows that he also used to tune his strings for other themes than the praise of God. (2 Sam. i. 19–27.) The Psalter being a collection of religious songs, has only preserved the spiritual songs of David.

The *form* of the lyric poetry of the Old Testament deserves to be noticed. The definition of poetry as "*bound speech*," points to

* Jno. of Mueller's Works, vol. v. pp. 122. 244.
† Lichtenberg's Works, vol. i. pp. 15. 37.
‡ "Prophesying," *i. e.* a prophetically inspired recitation or song.

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the fact that the poet imposes fetters and prescribes a measure, both to the expression of his sentiments and to the sentiments themselves. This renders the utterance of the most stirring emotions *harmonious* and *beautiful*. This fetter is in the poems of classical antiquity the syllabic measure or metre, while it appears in the songs of several Eastern nations, (who are however not unacquainted with *measure*,) as *e. g.* the Hindoos, Persians, and Arabs, as *rhyme*, and in those of the Icelanders and Spaniards as *assonance*. The *parallelism of the verse-members* binds the speech of Old Testament poetry. This form of poetry obtains also among the Chinese. We can easily conceive that the most impassioned speech did not only assume a metrical form, but involuntarily pass into it, since enthusiasm has an invariable tendency for rhythmical expression, even in outward movements; hence we find the dance joined to worship and singing;* hence David danced before the ark of the covenant.† It strikes one as strange, that a poet should fetter himself with searching for *like-sounding words* in the moment of most vivid excitement. But is not the musical effect of *like-sounding words* clearly seen? as is the case with assonance and the parallelism of members, where the words frequently correspond in so exact a manner that they actually rhyme in the original. But this is not all. The origin of that poetic form may be accounted for on other grounds. Under the impulse of strong emotion, thought ignores to express itself in simple proportions: it either separates into synonymous members of a qualifying tendency, or into antithesis. What, then, is more natural than that these members thus mutually related in *thought*, should by rhyme, assonance, or parallelism, become equally so in *form*? (Gen. iv. 23. Psalm viii. 5; xxv. 4.) In Hebrew poetry a thought most frequently resolves itself into symmetrical and synonymous members till it gets exhausted. Sometimes a second or third member adds some new and closely allied defining remark; or proposition and counter-proposition (*thesis and anti-thesis*) are placed together symmetrically.

Thus we have in Psalm i. 1, three, and in verse 2, two propositions, exactly corresponding in sense, and used only for the exhaustion of the idea: in verse 3, we find there is first the leading thought which advances through the succeeding three propositions in such a manner, that the last expresses in a direct form the indirect statements of the former. In Psalm ii. the two

* Exod. xv. 20. Psalm cxlix. 3; cl. 4. The opinion which refers the rhyme of romantic poetry to Arabic origin must be held as obsolete. Rhyme may be found in Latin ecclesiastical hymns as early as the fifth century: it exists also in the earliest Celtic songs, and flows successively through many verses, as in Oriental poems. *Vide* Wolf, p. 279.

† 2 Sam. vi. 16. On the connection between music and dancing, *vide* Herder's Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. p. 266.

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members of the first five verses are respectively synonymous: in verse 12, the first two members are synonymous, the third continues the idea, while the last introduces the antithesis. Not unfrequently word corresponds to word in the two members of a verse; this, however, does not necessarily belong to the law of parallelism. Such parallelisms occur also in the prophets, when their language gets impassioned, which otherwise is rather rhetorical than poetical. Compare in particular the Book of Lamentations with the Prophecies of Jeremiah. In Hab. iii. Isaiah xii. Jonah ii. may be seen some psalms of the prophets. (Isa. xxxviii. Hezekiah's.)

The Psalter, which the Jews of the later period divided as early as two hundred years before Christ* into five books, (Psalms i. xli. xlii. lxxii. lxxiii. lxxxix. xc. cvi. cvii. and cl.) corresponding to the five books of the Pentateuch, is exclusively designed for religious purposes, and contains, therefore, religious songs only. The edification of individuals, however, was less contemplated than that of the congregation, as is the case with our hymn books. Hence many Psalms bear the title, "To the chief musician," by which was meant the Levitical musician, whose office it was to conduct the worship of the congregation. That arrangement explains, *firstly*, why David's secular funeral ditty on Jonathan, recorded in the historic books, finds no place in the Psalter, and why but two psalms of Solomon, (Psalms lxxii. and cxxvii.) who, according to 1 Kings iv. 32, composed *one thousand* and *five* songs, have been inserted. It would indeed appear, from verse 33 of the passage alluded to, that Solomon's Song possessed a less religious character; and when it is said, in verse 29, that he possessed "largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore," we may interpret that he compassed the boundaries of knowledge as the ocean does the shores of the earth. Even Psalm cxxvii. though piously conceived, contemplates *social prosperity*. *Secondly*, it may be inferred from the design of the Psalms, that the *personal* songs of David were intentionally excluded from the collection of the Psalms; hence the absence of his last song. (2 Sam. xxiii.) *When* the collection and arrangement into five books of the separate Psalms took place, we know not; that it was a gradual process is evident from the following details: The *first* book, excepting Psalms i. ii. x. xxxiii. which are without titles, contains songs of David only; the *second* book, chiefly the songs of his musicians, the songs of Korah and Asaph, with a supplement of Davidic songs. (Psalms li.—lxv. lxviii.—lxx.) The compiler of the *third* book† has inserted the words, "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended,"

* This division is that of the LXX.

† Linguistic grounds show that the compiler of the second book did not add that sentence. See De Wette's Comment. on the Psalms, p. 18.

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between this and the second: it was therefore no longer his intention to collect Davidic songs. The *fourth* and *fifth* books, again, contain some of the psalms of David, but the number of those which appear to have been used in the services of the Second Temple increase, while some bear distinct marks of having been composed after the return from the captivity. (Psalms cxxvi. cxxxvii. cxlix.) The hypothesis of a gradual collection alone explains the recurrence of the same Psalms with slight deviations. (Cf. Psalm xiv. with liii.; xl. 18 with lxx.) The restoration and rearrangement of the temple-worship took place during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah. Songs of praise occupied a prominent place in the feasts; hence it is thought that the collections of the Psalms were, in all probability, if not earlier, then instituted. It appears from Prov. xxv. 1, that Hezekiah gave orders for a collection of *Solomon's Proverbs;* according to 2 Chron. xxix. 30, he caused the Songs of David to be sung; how probable, therefore, that he ordered a collection of the Songs of David and his musicians to be made. The Psalter, in its present form, however, cannot be traced to a time anterior to the Second Temple.

The titles of the Psalms did not originate with the compilers, but with those who first wrote them down, or in the authors themselves. For it is not uncommon with poets among the ancient Arabians and Syrians, to prefix their own names to their poems: thus the prophets frequently place their names at the head of their prophecies, (Isa. i. 2; Jer. i. 4; Hos. i. 2,) as *e. g.* Balaam, in Numbers xxiv. 3. 15, Habakkuk's Psalm (Hab. iii.,) and the Song of Hezekiah, (Isa. xxxviii. 9.) That David adhered to the same practice is undeniably clear from 2 Samuel xxiii. 1, cf. also the title to Psalm xviii. which had been seen by the author of the Books of Samuel (2 Sam. xxii.)* Those titles may confidently be ascribed to David himself, which are couched in poetic language, and relate to the contents of the Psalm; *e. g.* Psalm xxii. if we render with Luther, "Concerning the early pursued hind," and refer this to David himself; and Psalm lvi. where David describes himself as a mute, innocent dove in a foreign country. Those Psalms, however, which simply have, "Of David," may have been added at their being written down for the first time, since the author's name was not immaterial to the admirer of a song. If the addition of the titles originated with the compilers in the days of Hezekiah, we should be shut up to the supposition that certain verbal traditions respecting the separate psalms had been transmitted, which certainly is the less probable case. The opinion has been diffused in modern times, that the compilers determined the titles from

* The Song of Lamentation (2 Sam. i.) is not likely to have been recorded in "The Book of the Upright, without any account of the author and the theme: 17 and 18 verses furnish the words of the title.

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mere supposition, or the indications contained in the historical books; but (Ps. vii. lx.) not all the statements are connected with the historical books, while those which are, Psalm liv. excepted, are by no means taken from them literally, (Psalms xxxiv. li. liii. lvii. lix. lx.) and in Psalm lvi. there even occurs a slight difference in matter, as compared with 1 Sam. xxi. *etc.*

Respecting the *design* and *use* of the Psalms, we may divide them as to their contents into songs of praise, of thanksgiving, of complaint, and instruction, as Psalm i. and xxxvii. A portion of them may at once be regarded as *prayers*, or *colloquies of the heart with God;* (Ps. xix. 15, where A. V. renders, "The meditation of my heart.") Hence the first two collections of the Psalms are called (Ps. lxxii. 20,) "*The Prayers of David.*" These, partly sung under circumstances in which the psalmists *could* not possibly contemplate anything but their own immediate need, were afterwards designed for congregational use, and furnished with the addition, "To the chief musician," and the direction on which instruments they were to be performed. David however, who calls himself (2 Sam. xxiii. 1,) "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," composed others expressly for the use of the congregation, as *e. g.* on the removal of the ark to Mount Zion, (Psalms xv. xxiv.) on going to war, on triumphal festivities, (Ps. xx. xxi. lxviii.) and on pilgrimages to the sanctuary. (Ps. cxxii.) Personal relations are of course entirely absent in that species of psalms. On this point, it has already been observed that psalms too personal in their allusions were excluded: if, however, certain psalms, to judge from the occasions to which their titles refer, lead us to expect individual references, as *e. g.* Psalm lii. liv. lvi. lvii. we should remember that the absence of historical allusion has its analogy in the spiritual songs of Luther, Paul, Gerhard, *etc.*

It is the mark of religious morbidity if a pious poet cannot free himself from his personal relations, while it indicates strength if he knows to enter into general truths and the relations of God to man and his Church. In the measure as a Christian's piety is developed, he learns to find under even extraordinary difficulties in the Lord's Prayer the expression adapted to his need. The Psalms of David may have been extensively circulated during his life-time: we read (2 Sam. i. 18) that he caused the funeral ditty on Jonathan to be learned by heart: the same song had been inserted into a collection of National Songs, "The Book of Jasher," (the book of the upright.)* To infer from the title, Psalm lx. was intended to be committed to memory. David had appointed singers, (1 Chron. xvi. 37. 41.) both at the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle, who chiefly used his own compositions: we may also presume that

* It is not likely that that book contained Psalms, because it appears chiefly to have celebrated great heroes and heroic feats.

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David himself used to sing psalms in the service (cf. Psalm xx. xxi. and Ps. xxvi. 6, 7.) In the time of Amos, about two hundred years after David, his Psalms were so popular that the nobility used to frame secular songs on their model, (Amos. vi. 5.) Hezekiah appointed the singing of the Psalms as part of the divine service, (2 Chron. xxix. 30:) so did Ezra and Nehemiah in the service of the Second Temple, (Ezra iii. 10, 11; Neh. xii. 24, 45.) Even such psalms, which, with slight deviations, are repetitions or compositions of the Psalms of David, as *e. g.* Psalms liii. lxx. cviii. and the final verses at a later period added to others, (Psalms xiv. lxviii. xxxv.) indicate the diligent use of Davidic songs, both during the captivity and the period of the Second Temple.

Song and music were prominent features of divine worship in David's time. This is evident from the large number of two hundred and eighty-eight Levites who were expressly appointed for singing and the performance of music. (1 Chron. xxv. [xxvi.] 7.) Not less than two hundred and fifty-five singing men and singing women returned from the exile. (Neh. vii. 67.) Leaders were appointed to the several divisions, Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun, (1 Chron. xxv. 6.) A singer is mentioned (1 Chron. xv. [xvi.] 22,) on the occasion of the removal of the ark, whose special business it was to teach song. So in the time of the Second Temple the singers had their leaders. (Neh. xii. 24; xlii. 46.) "David beautified their feasts, and set in order the solemn times perfectly, that they might praise his holy name, and that the temple might sound from morning." (Sir. xlvii. 12. [10.])

The chief instruments used by the Levites were, according to the records of the Books of Chronicles, cymbals, harps, and lutes; according to Psalm v. 1, we should add the flute, which is frequently noticed on Egyptian monuments. At processions, females played the "*doff*," *i. e.* the bass-tambourine, which is still very common in the East. The monuments of ancient Egypt show this instrument to have been struck by females at religious festivals. The same monuments, six thousand years old, have representations of a large number of stringed instruments; an eight-stringed harp, a three-stringed guitar.* The Israelites may have brought them from Egypt. The music and song of the Levites used to be performed at the times of the morning and evening sacrifices, but chiefly on Sabbaths and festivals. (Psalms lxxxi. xcii. cxviii.) After the priests had finished the sacrifice, while the trumpets sounded, the Levites, accompanied by music, used to begin their song. (1 Chron. xvi. 40—42; 2 Chron. xxix. 25—30; Psalm xx. 4; Neh. xii. 42, 43; 1 Macc. iv. 54.) The picture of a procession of the ark through the outer court, accompanied by song and music, is indicated in Psalm lxviii. 25—28.

* The name "*lute*" is, like the instrument itself, of Oriental origin; its Arabic name is "*alaud*."

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"They have seen thy goings, O God.

"*Even* the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.

"The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after.

"Among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.

"Bless ye God in the congregations, *even* the Lord, from the fountain of Israel." (Cf. margin.)

Nearest to the ark were the singers, then came the players on stringed instruments along with damsels striking the tambourine. Even a verse of their song is given. In the description of the dedication of the temple of Solomon, the music of the Levites on stringed instruments was accompanied by the sound of the silver trumpets of the priests. Even the Pagans found those songs so sweet, that during the captivity they asked the Levites for some of their Psalms. (Ps. cxxxviii. 3.)

Antiphonic choruses obtained in the remotest times. (Cf. Exod. xv. 20, 21.) They existed during the period of the Second Temple. (Neh. xii. 40—42.) Those choruses distributed among themselves the contents of the songs, and were not confined to the mere repetition of the same tune in a lower key, as is the custom in the modern East. (Niebuhr's Travels, i. p. 176.) This is evident from many psalms, (Psalms xx. lxviii. cxviii. cxxxii. cxxxiv.) but chiefly from Psalm cxxxvi. where the refrain, "For his mercy endureth for ever," was doubtless sung by a chorus. We should then conceive of sacred song as either consisting of two responding choruses or of a Levite precentor, responded by a chorus of Levites. Responsive song seems to have been common among the ancient Egyptians.* Responses, indeed, belong to the character of national song.† It is a question how far the congregation took part in singing. To the best of our knowledge, the Old Testament nowhere mentions congregational sacred singing. It appears that the Levites only used to sing at public worship. There is nothing strange in this, if we bear in mind the relation of the priesthood to the people under the Jewish economy. The service of the Roman Catholic Church corresponds in this respect also to the idea and form of the Old Testament service. In the former the share of the people has since about the sixth century been restricted to the antiphonies of the "*formulæ solennes*," and even that small share passed at a later period into the "*schola cantorum*." It may

* Champillion describes an ancient Egyptian grotto-painting, representing a singer accompanied by a musician, and supported by two choruses, consisting of males and females. (Hengstenberg's Moses and Egypt, p. 133.) The support may probably mean, that now the choruses perform simultaneously (the females only marking the time), and then the singer performs a solo.

† Wolf, p. 122, *etc.*, who shows that the refrain occurs in the oldest species of national song, the Icelandic, *etc.*

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even be questioned whether the refrains frequently occurring in the Psalms, (Psalms xlii. xliii. xlvi. lvii.) or other emphasized final words, were sung by the people at all, and not entirely confined to the singers. Since, however, from the period after the exile, the prayers and songs used to receive the confirmation of the people by an "Amen," while they lifted up their hands and bowed their heads, (Neh. viii. 6,) we may assume that the Hebrew people* used to sing formulæ, similar to those to which in the ninth and tenth centuries the share of the Roman Catholic people was restricted, viz.—Hallelujah, and Kyrie Eleyson;† at all events it is not improbable that the people joined in the singing of the refrain. A similar relation obtained in the synagogue service of the later Jews. But apart from the service there existed religious songs among the people; we may especially assume the existence of Songs of Pilgrimage. (Psalm cxxii.) Many think that the so-called "Songs of Degree" (in Luther's version, "Songs in the Higher Choir," because he believed that they used to be sung from the high choir like the Psalms of the ancient church,) were songs of pilgrimage used by the Israelites, who went up to the temple at Jerusalem to the three great festivals. Here we have once more a resemblance to the Roman Catholic Church, for the so-called "Songs of Pilgrimage" (Hoffman, pp. 113—129,) are among the oldest sacred national songs. The songs in 2 Sam. i. 18, Psalm lx. seem to be national, because they were intended to be learnt by heart.

Another question remains. What was the *manner* of singing? The more common view inclines to a *cantillare* rather than a *cantare*. Something like the Mass service, or the intonations of the Lutheran clergy at the altar—a solemn chanting, during which the voice rests with diversified modulations on separate notes. This view has in its favour that, probably, every species of national song was originally sung only in that manner. Fauriel says, that the singing of the Greek clephts resembles cathedral song; Walker, that the ancient Irish bards used thus to sing the songs of Ossian. Synagogic singing (the notes of which may be found in the periodical, "The Jew" [*Der Jude*,] Selig. vol. ii. p. 80,) and the singing of the Mohammedans at the reading of the Koran and the Dsikr (*i. e.* the recitation of the name of the Deity,) are of the same kind. Lane (*Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, Lond. 1836, vol. ii. pp. 92, 192) gives specimens. Even Greek religious songs (in the second century) were sung in a manner related to cathedral song, as appears from Bellermann's "Hymns of Dionysius and Mesomedes," Berlin, 1840. Synagogic

* Haberfeld (Baruch or the Doxologies of the Bible. Leips. 1806,) expatiates on the antiphonies of the Old Testament service, but furnishes suppositions only. He admits, as is maintained by some, that Sir. l. 24, is an antiphony of the people, which is the most important passage.

† Hoffman's History of Sacred Song. 1832. P. 7, *etc.*

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singing, the liturgic singing of the Mohammedans, and the more ancient Christian cathedral song, coincide in the lengthening and modulating of certain final notes; they are, among the Jews, the word "echad;" *one*, in the formula, "Thy God is *one* God;" in the Mohammedan Dsikrs, the syllable "Al," in Allah; in the Mass-services, the syllable, "Jah," in Hallelujah.* The cantillation of the Psalms is again probable from their nature, which renders their separation into strophes of equal length impossible. Unequal strophes occur in most of the Psalms: their separation is not always certain even in the case of refrains (*e. g.* Ps. xlii. xliii.) the number of the verses does not correspond, while their length varies. We can only assume then a tune running on, as in the case of the said Greek songs, and if so, that amounts to cantillation. For the same reason the singing of psalms in the ancient Christian Church cannot have been our choral song. (v. p. 2.) The prominent position of the precentor in the synagogue and the ancient Church seems to agree with this view. The design of some Psalms, (*e .g.* Psalms xxi. cxviii.) unmistakeably points to solo performance. Others present exceptions. Logical strophes of an equal number of verses occur in Psalms i. ii. xii. xxiv. xli. cxiv. cxxviii. *etc.* But was the repetition of the same tune confined to these? According to the titles of Psalms lvii.—lix. *etc.* several psalms differing in matter were sung to the same tune (perhaps the same manner); may not this, again, point to cantillation?

SECTION III.

THE AUTHORS OF THE PSALMS.

THE history and place of David in the kingdom of God accord to him our chief interest. We have more psalms from him than from any one else. There are seventy-four psalms headed by his name—a small number, if compared with the one thousand and five songs of Solomon. It must be assumed for certain, that we have only a selection, as appears from the two psalms which, though recorded in the books of Samuel, find no place in the Psalter. We introduce our remarks on David in the words of Sirach: "In all his works he praised the holy one Most High, with words of glory, with his whole heart he sung songs, and

* *Vide* Buxtorf, Synagoga Judaica, p. 205. Lane, vol. ii. p. 197. Wolf, *etc.* This lengthened note of the mass was called Neuma, *i. e.* Pneuma; it was afterwards based on texts, which, because they followed the Hallelujah, were termed "Sequences."

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loved him that made him. He set singers also before the altar, that by their voices they might make sweet melody, and daily sing praises in their songs. He beautified their feasts, and set in order the solemn times, until the end, that they might praise his holy name, and that the temple might sound from morning. The Lord took away his sins and exalted his horn for ever; he gave him a covenant of kings and a throne of glory in Israel." (Sir. xlvii. 9—13.)

From comparing 1 Sam. xvi. 17—19, with chap. xvii. 13, 14. 28, it appears that his hand was wont to strike the harp, when it was thought too weak for combat and war: he was feeding his father's sheep, while his elder brothers went out into the field. We have reason to think, that even at so tender an age he did not confine himself to accompanying the harp with the songs of others, but that the praise of God was the favourite theme of his own compositions. How great a testimony to the power and humility of his faith is furnished in the words of glorious renown, which the heroic youth addressed to the Philistine: "Thou comest to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands." (1 Sam. xvii. 45—47.) Who can forbear to recognize in these words the humble power of faith, which resounds to us afterwards in the song of the aged man (Ps. xviii. xxx. xxxi.)? "For by thee I have run through a troop: and by my God have I leaped over a wall." "For who is a God, save the Lord? or who is a rock, save our God?" His playing of the harp was able to overcome the gloomy mind of Saul, because the Spirit of God influenced his playing and songs. Taken to the king's court, he forgot not his art. He practised it *daily* (1 Sam. xviii. 10,) and doubtless derived from it comfort in many a sad hour, for his chequered path began there. The king gave him his affection, and it is said of the royal prince, that "he loved him as his own soul." (1 Sam. xviii. 1.) But suspicion was lurking in the already darksome mind of Saul, when the people praised the shepherd youth's valour above his own, (1 Sam. xviii. 7,) and during an attack of melancholic passion he cast a javelin at the harmless singer. Saul regaining strength, and shrinking from a personal attack, appointed David to the post of a captain over a thousand, actuated by the same treacherous motive which David himself afterwards entertained against Uriah, viz. that the foe might kill him in the battle. (1 Sam. xviii. 25.) David married the king's daughter; their union, contrary to Eastern habit, was not entered upon by external necessity, but by

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the bonds of love. (1 Sam. xviii. 20.) The hand of the Lord protected David in his campaigns: Saul fell so greatly, that he actually asked Jonathan and his servants to assassinate David: overcome by Jonathan's reasonings he yielded for a time to feelings of penitence; (1 Sam. xix. 6;) but David's fresh victories rekindled his displeasure. He cast another javelin at him, which again entered the wall. He sent murderers after him—but Michael's love and cleverness made a way for escape. It is natural that the courtiers of such a monarch should resemble him. The words of David, (in 1 Sam. xxiv. 10; xxvi. 19; Ps. vii.*) and the conduct of Doeg, (1 Sam. xxii. 9. 13,) show that they fanned the flame of suspicion, and accused the harmless young man of secret designs against the life and crown of the king. The expectation of the king's favour or of gain may have prompted them to falsehood; but there was yet another motive which came powerfully into play. Such was the jealousy of the tribe of the Benjaminites, to whom Saul belonged, against the youth of the tribe of Judah, whose ascension to the throne they feared might result in their being obliged to yield place to others. All the courtiers of Saul were Benjaminites; (1 Sam. xxii. 7;) so was Cush (Ps. vii.) and mocking Shimei. (2 Sam. xvi.)† Finally, we must not overlook that their enmity found ample fuel in the piety of David, for there were but few that could rightly appreciate it, and *many* who felt reproved by its exhibition. Obliged to flee from the court, he hastened to the school of the prophets on the plains (Najoth) near Ramah, between whom and himself there existed already spiritual sympathies. A brief interval of some kind of understanding with Saul seems then to have followed, since David was expected to take his place at the king's table. (1 Sam. xx. 25.) He knew, however, how little reliance was to be reposed in the changeable king, and Jonathan confirmed his first fears. Then commenced those days of exile, of which he sings in Psalm lvi. 9. "Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears into thy bottle. *Are they* not in thy book?"‡ His next place of refuge was Nob, close

* Introd. to Psalm vii.

† Cf. Introd. to Psalms v. and lxxviii.

‡ At the close of the narrative of the meeting of Jonathan and David, before his departure, we read, (1 Sam. xx. 42,) "And he arose and departed; and Jonathan went into *the city*." Which city? Gibea, close to Ramah, the place of Saul's nativity, seems to have been his usual residence. (1 Sam. x. 26; xi. 4; xv. 34; xxiii. 19; xxvi. 1.) But it is said (1 Sam. xvii. 54,) that David took the head of Goliath to Jerusalem, and from the immediate sequel one feels inclined to infer that Saul occasionally resided there. Once for all observe, that the idea of great distances respecting the places of Judea, referred to in David's history, should be abandoned. Gibea and Bethlehem were about four miles—Gibeon, the place of the tabernacle, (which according to Movers on the books of Chron. p. 298, *etc.*, is identical with Gibea,) about seven miles—

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to Jerusalem, (*vide* ad. Ps. lix,) where the tabernacle was at that time; he there went to Ahimelech, the high priest, the descendant of Eli. (1 Sam. xxii. 11; xiv. 3.) The close intimacy of the youthful David with the sons of the prophets, and his warm friendship with the high priest, furnish a striking testimony to his great attachment for the sanctuary and its officers. "Who is," said Ahimelech to the king, "so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house? *Did I then* (to-day) *begin to inquire of God for him?*" After Doeg had slain that man, David immediately took his son under his protection. (1 Sam. xxii. 23.) He next thinks of a place of refuge out of his native country, remote from the power of Saul. He resorted accordingly to Gath of the Philistines; but recognized and led before Achish, it was only by a stratagem that he was able to escape the vengeance of that king. (*Vide* ad. Ps. lvi.) On returning into Saul's kingdom, he first looked for an asylum in the tribe of Judah, then removed to the more distant regions of the Dead Sea to Kejilah, near Hebron, and then still further towards the South to the most inaccessible mountain heights along the borders of the Dead Sea, into the wilderness of Ziph, of Mahon, and Engedi—into mountain passes which are expressly called "the rocks of the wild goats," (1 Sam. xxiv. 3,) at an altitude of fifteen hundred feet above the level of the sea. (*Vide* ad. Ps. lvii.) The southernmost point is the wilderness of Pharan. On his retreat he had, however, not remained alone. Four hundred and soon six hundred men, ruined in their affairs, and hoping to better their condition through David,* had joined him. (1 Sam. xxii. 2; xxiii. 13.) Nothing, however, was more remote from his thoughts than to lead them in rebellion against whom he knew to be "the anointed of the Lord;" he only employed them in skirmishes against foreign tribes. Saul, who was twice delivered into his hands, he twice treated with a generosity that touched his fierce persecutor and caused him to exclaim, "Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee

Ramah nine miles—Jericho twenty-four miles—the Dead Sea (which is, however, sixty-six miles in length) about thirty-six miles from Jerusalem. The greatest extent of the whole country did not exceed the distance from Berlin to Halle, *i. e.* from Sidon to Sodom one hundred and thirty-two miles, the greatest breadth from Rabbath Ammon to Joppa eighty-four miles. And yet according to 2 Samuel xxiv. the population of the country amounted, in the reign of David, to 1,300,000 valiant men that drew the sword; hence since the total population of a country generally equals four times the number of adult males—to about five millions. Still more diminutive appears the size of the kingdom of Judah—one day's journey on foot—*i. e.* sixty miles in length, and forty-two in breadth.

* Many of them probably entertained views of David's future similar to those of Abigail. (1 Sam. xxv. 28–30.)

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evil. And thou hast showed this day, how thou hast dealt well with me; forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. Swear now, therefore, unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house." (1 Sam. xxiv. 17—21.) David's words on this occasion, and on his second encounter with Saul (chap. xxvi.) should be well noticed; they exhibit so distinct an agreement between the mind of David and the sentiments which pervade many of his psalms, that their very expression bears a strong resemblance. (*Vide* ad. Psalms xi. and xvi.) "The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee; but *mine* hand shall not be upon thee." "As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed." "If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering; *but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord;* for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods." "And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation."

The continuous reference in the Psalms to multitudes of enemies, to fraud, deceit, and persecution, to desire of revenge and thirst for blood, to David's repeatedly calling himself one innocently persecuted, to his escape into the mountains, to the abandonment of all earthly hopes, to persecutors set upon him like wild beasts; (Psalms xxii. lvii. v. *etc.*) all these produce but poor impressions on such minds, who only listen to the voice of the *poet*, and perceive in them poetic *forms* only. We should bring the history of David to them, to perceive that such passages express the much-stirred life of a much-tried man. Although the historic basis for the understanding of the Psalms, furnished in the books of Samuel, could be desired more extensive, it is nevertheless sufficient for enabling us to recognize the fundamental traits of the events and conditions of mind, to which allusion is made in the Psalms.

Even the generous conduct of David had not yet cured Saul of his suspicion; the former preferred, tired of his long wanderings on mountains and plains, once more to try his fortune with the Philistines. No longer alone, but heading six hundred warriors, and a heroic fame for his precursor, he might expect a good reception with Achish, on offering his services to him. He met

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one, and engaged in expeditions against the Amalekites and other nations, continued there until at last his loyalty was put to a severe test, when the Philistines made preparations for war against Saul. He manifested on that occasion the same sagacity of which he had furnished the evidence in other junctures. Foreseeing the result, he responded in undivided terms to the call of Achish: (1 Sam. xxviii. 2:) he next joined, accompanied by his people, the van of the army, and found his anticipations realized. The misgivings of the Philistine captains as to the propriety of permitting this Hebrew to march against his countrymen, effected his being sent back. (1 Sam. xxix.) His wanderings had now reached their termination. After Saul was killed in that battle, the tribe of Judah chose David for their king. It had been a time of much-tried waiting, covering not less than ten years. David had stood the test with persevering faith. How noble the generosity which, after the death of Saul, caused him to rear a standing memorial to his valour in his song, "Of the bow," where he sings: "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil." How warmly flows the expression of his gratitude to those who had buried Saul. (2 Sam. ii. 5, 6.) As he had sworn to Saul at their meeting, (1 Sam. xxiv. 22,) he showed kindness to his descendants: (2 Sam. iv. 5—12, and ix. 3, *etc.*) though afterwards, to perform an imagined piece of necessary justice, he suffered himself to be misguided to deliver seven of Saul's sons into the hands of the Gibeonites. (2 Sam. xxi.)

How touchingly he expresses (Psalm xviii.) the deep gratitude that filled his heart after he had overcome his time of trial, when he forcibly describes how the hand of God had visibly been stretched out from heaven, and drawn him out of great waters.

He did not at once obtain the government of the entire nation: his own tribe (Judah) alone acknowledged him, (which in numbers, however, nearly equalled the rest,*) and he ruled it at Hebron for seven years and a half, while the other eleven tribes remained under the descendants of Saul. After that period they, too, rendered him homage. One of his first acts was the arrangement of the priestly worship, and the removal of the ark to Zion. In

* Cf. the data of the census, 2 Sam. xxiv. 9, from which, however, the Chronicles and Josephus deviate a little. The number of the tribe of Judah is, indeed, disproportionately great, especially as we find (1 Kings xii. 21,) the army of the kingdom of Judah and Benjamin limited to one hundred and eighty thousand men. According to Numb. i. 27, the tribe of Judah was stronger than all the rest.

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victorious campaigns he then successively humbled the Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Syrians, and extended the frontiers of his kingdom to the Euphrates. His fame spread to distant regions. (2 Sam. viii. 9; v. 11.) The sceptre of his kingdom was confirmed to his race for eternal times. (2 Sam. vii. 13.) An event occurred, however, which deeply affected the honoured and aged king, and reminded him of his former days of tribulation.

Absalom's ambition gave rise to revolt, and once more drove him from the capital towards the region of that wilderness, where he had spent the greater portion of his days when he fled from Saul. (*Vide* ad. Psalms iii. lv. lxiii.) He had even to quit the boundaries of Canaan, and go beyond Jordan. Of less importance was the insurrection of the Benjaminite, Sheba, (*vide* ad. Ps. lxxviii.) and the projected rebellion of Adonijah. In the seventieth year of his life, after a reign of forty years and six months, David died, and was buried at Jerusalem. His noble principles of government are expressed in Psalm ci.: one of his subjects furnishes the following testimonial, in Psalm lxxviii. 70—72: "God chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." As with a mother's faithfulness he tended the nursing lambs when he was their shepherd, so he transferred that faithfulness to his people when he became their shepherd.

This is a bird's eye view of the history of David. The different Psalms may be referred, if not with certainty, yet with more or less of probability, to the different periods of his life. The fact that most of them were composed in days of tribulation, during the time of his residence at the court of Saul, (Psalms v. xli. lix. lxix. cxl.) the time of his flight before Saul (Psalms iii. iv. vi. vii. xi. xiii. xxii. xxxiv. lii. lvi. lvii. cxlii.) and Absalom, (Psalms iii. xxvii. lv. lxiii.) should not surprise us, since the harp was just in seasons of that kind the comfort of the pious minstrel.

A great number of our own hymns were composed in the gloomy days of the thirty years' war. The use of David's plaintive songs at worship caused him constantly to renew and multiply the praises of God for his aid and deliverance, an exercise from which he doubtless derived much benefit. As to the remainder of his Psalms, some were composed for special use at certain public festivals, (Psalms xv. xxiv. xx. xxi. lxviii. cxxii.;) others were occasioned by incidents of war, (Psalms ix. x. lx.;) some are didactic, (Psalm xxxvii.) others psalms of nature, (Psalms viii. xix. xxix.;) some psalms of praise, (Psalms xvi. xviii. xxiii. xxx. cxxxviii.) others penitential, (Psalms xxxii. li.;) Psalms ii. and x. are Messianic.

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Glancing at the religious-moral character of David, and then at the character of his Psalms, we recognise courage and warmth of heart as its most prominent features. The boy who slew a lion and a bear, slung the stone with so much assurance at the face of gigantic Goliath, that he fell to the earth. But the tender youth—ruddy and of a fair countenance, (1 Sam. xvii. 42)—shows himself equally susceptible to tender emotions. His heart lacked no susceptibility for any kind of love: his union to Michal was, as has been already noticed, not the result of convenience, but of genuine affection. (1 Sam. xviii. 20.) Jonathan, his *friend*, loved him "*as his own soul.*" *Filial* piety was so sacred to him, that in his greatest troubles, he never forgot a child's duties, but cared for his father and mother. (1 Sam. xxii. 3.) His *paternal* tenderness towards his children almost knew no limits. (2 Sam. xviii. 33; xii. 18.) We have already noticed his *loyalty* to his king in spite of all persecution. How soon his *royal* indignation could kindle when it regarded the administration of justice towards his subjects, appears from 2 Sam. xii. 5. The tender relations subsisting between him and the people of Jerusalem reveals touchingly the scene of his flight before Absalom: "And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over." (2 Sam. xv. 23.) The noble *general* is seen in 2 Sam. xxiii. 17. His faithfulness of promise was infallible; the words in which he mourned the violent death of honest Abner breathe simultaneously *love* and *indignation*. (Cf. ad. Psalm lviii.) His anger for the murder of Ishbosheth, committed against his promise to the contrary, could hardly be kept within bounds. (2 Sam. iv. 12.) He was soon angry, but gave grateful hearing to calming speech. (1 Sam. xxv. 25—35.) But the root of all his virtues was "*the fear of God.*" In every situation of life, he looked up to the *Lord*, (with this correspond the words which *history* furnishes concerning him.) The boy who with his sling faced the Philistine expected the power of victory from the Lord. (1 Sam. xvii. 45.) He thanked the Lord, when his persecutor was delivered into his hand, and to the Lord he prays for strength, that he might not sin against him. (1 Sam. xxiv. 7.) He deemed it as a mercy of the Lord that Abigail's admonition preserved him for sinning, (1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33;) he besought the Lord for counsel in his martial enterprises, (1 Sam. xxiii. 2; 2 Sam. v. 19, 23;) he humbly acknowledged the will of the Lord when he lost the throne, and had to bear the contempt of rebellious subjects, (2 Sam. xv. 25; xvi. 11, 12;) he praised the Lord with deep gratitude and humility when he received the glorious promises of the future of his race, (2 Sam. vii. 18, *etc.*;) when the exultation in which he burst forth, singing and dancing before the ark of the Lord, was met with derision, he said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the

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people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight." (2 Sam. vi. 21, 22.) The loftiness of such expressions of his piety in word and deed, would seem to render the offence of his adultery with Bathsheba, and his sin against Uriah, the more enormous. While it is habitual with legally righteous Pharisees and the servants of sin, who just understand the clever avoidance of *appearances*, to heap the rudest reproach on David for those transgressions, and acclaim the right of rising far above him, it is, especially for practical ministers, matter of indispensable necessity to regard that event in its true nature. Now if on the one hand it be apparent that David by no means rushed without all thought headlong to the commission of his double crime, but that sin also in his case gradually lured the weak into her net, and that on the other if anywhere in this case the depth of repentance seems to have equalled the greatness of the crime, we may well ask, Who dares to throw the first stone on the fallen one? See also Comment. to Psalm li.

We shall now endeavour to apprehend the peculiar features of the Davidic compositions in relation to the psalms of other authors. *One* difference is strikingly apparent. A certain child-like warmth and simplicity seems peculiar to the Psalms of David. (Psalms xi. xvi. xxiii. xxvii. lxi. cxxxi. and cxxxiii.) If we are anxious to gain the impression of a heart peaceful and happy in God, we have only to read his psalms. The same expressions of that peculiar child-like familiarity with God, and silent resignation, occur also in some of his sentiments in the historic books. As such we count his already named reply to the mockery of his wife Michal, the expression of his gratitude for Abigail's dehortation from vengeance against Nabal, the words of resignation on his being compelled to leave Jerusalem for fear of Absalom, *etc.* (2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.) On the other hand his Psalms portray the energy and courage of the youth who slew Goliath, and of the man who became the terror of surrounding nations, wielded the sceptre of the kingdom with a firm hand, and irrevocably punished oppression. (Psalms xviii. lx. ci. lii. lviii.) We are now-a-days wont to conceive of a hero as endowed with a stoical mastery of his affections, and chiefly of his grief. In the heroes of antiquity, however, weeping and tears were deemed no disgrace. *History* records the violent outbreak of David's grief as most overwhelming on receiving the news of Absalom's death. (2 Sam. xviii. 33.) Regarding the Psalter as reflecting the *inward* history of the man, which accompanied outward acts, we may perceive how deeply all his experiences entered into his heart. The Psalms make us to look down into the abysses of grief and despair. It is truly elevating to observe how, while praying and singing, his soul mounts sometimes as it were on the steps of a ladder, from verse to verse, to joyous exultation, and the

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psalm which was begun in a tone of deepest complaint, ends with triumphant song. This is most distinctly and remarkably indicated in Psalm xxii. Sometimes the voice of exultation will burst through the anguish of the prayer, as in Psalm vi. 9; xxviii. 6: he perceives inward communications from God, which tear (Psalms xii. 6; xiv. 4; xxxii. 8; xxvii. 8) him as it were at once from out of the deepest tribulation. Some psalms of grief and hesitancy, beginning with an "In the Lord do I put my trust," (Psalms xi. 1; xxv. 2; xxvi. 2,) shine like beacons. Taken as a whole, the Psalms of David possess not the plenitude of poetic imagination, though that exists in some. Exceedingly beautiful and grand is the execution of the image at the beginning of Psalm xviii. which contrasts the days of his affliction with those of his prosperity. Psalms xxix. cx. and cxxxix. are sublime.

Since we find that poetry, music, and song were more frequently united in one person in remote antiquity than in later times, when those activities became more separate, there arises spontaneously the supposition, that the individuals whom David appointed as chief musicians and leaders of the Levites, as they combined music and song, were also versed in *poetry*. (The three leaders, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, were, according to Chronicles, both chief musicians and chief singers.) The example of David must have exerted a great influence. It appears from Amos vi. 5, that the nobility used to frame *secular* songs on the model of David's compositions. How much more may the *spiritual* songs of David have served as models! How exact an imitation of David is the Psalm in Hab. iii. Asaph, Heman, and perhaps Jeduthun, are mentioned as *seers*, while Ethan and Heman, who, according to Chronicles and the titles of Psalms lxxxviii. lxxxix. were Levitic singers, are accounted among the wisest of men, (1 Kings iv. 31; [v. 11.]) The titles ascribe twelve psalms to Asaph, (Psalm l. 73—83,) eleven to the children of Korah. Some psalms, however, cannot have had Asaph, the cotemporary of David, for their author (*e. g.* Psalms lxxiv. lxxvii. lxxix. lxxx.,) as they unmistakeably refer to the last times of the Jewish empire: the same is the case with the psalm of Ethan, (Psalm lxxxix.) It may be concluded, that the psalms of Asaph were by no means designated by his name without sufficient reasons for it, because, in some respects, they really bear strong marks of resemblance. It is not improbable that the name, "Asaph," stands for the entire family of singers of Asaph's children, so that no particular regard was paid to the poetic productions of their separate authors. So the Korahite psalms are ascribed to that family as a whole. As the names of Jacob, Joseph, and Ephraim are used to designate their entire races, why might not the same apply to the name of Asaph? Most parties, at least, are now agreed that Jeduthun, in Psalms xxxix. and lxxvii. refers to the Jeduthun family of singers. The

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race of Asaph reaches down to the latest times: 2 Chron. xx. 14, Jehasiel, a Levite of the children of Asaph, is named as a prophet in the days of Jehosaphat, who is probably to be regarded as the author of Psalm lxxxiii. (Cf. ad. Psalm lxxxiii.) Descendants of Asaph returned from the exile, according to Neh. vii. 47, not less than one hundred and forty-eight, according to Ezra ii. 41, one hundred and twenty-eight singers; and since, according to Nehemiah vii. 47, the number of male and female singers who returned was two hundred and forty-five, it is evident that the greater number were Asaphites: though Jeduthunite singers are mentioned as well. (Neh. xi. 17.) Excellent, as to form and contents, are the didactic poems of Asaph, (Psalms l. and lxxiii.) The other psalms of Asaph are distinguished by a certain vivacity and freshness. (On the psalm of Ethan, *vide* Psalm lxxxix. Com.) The psalms of the children of Korah stand highest for poetic symmetry, elevation, vivacity, and warmth of sentiment, (Psalms xlii.—xlix. lxxxiv. lxxxv. lxxxvii. lxxxviii.) Some of these psalms were composed by Levites in the times of David, *e. g.* Psalms xlii. xliii. xlvii. lxxxiv.; others, however, refer to the days of Hezekiah and the invasion of Sennacherib. (Psalms xlvi. xlviii. lxxxvii.) The Korahite songs, as well as the Asaphite, bear a certain peculiarity, which shows that the singers of certain families educated themselves after the model of their predecessors. Psalm lxxxviii. alone, besides the general designation, bears also the name of Heman. (Cf. ad. Psalm lxxxviii.)

There are, besides, a song of Moses, (Psalm xc.) which bears most thoroughly the expression of his austerity, and two songs of Solomon. (Psalms lxxii. cxxvii.) Psalm cxxxii. which was sung at the dedication of Solomon's Temple, (Solomon's prayer contains, according to Chronicles, some passages of this Psalm,) may perhaps have him for its author. (Cf. ad. Psalm cxxxii.)

SECTION IV.

DOCTRINE AND ETHICS OF THE PSALMS.

I.—*God and the Government of the World.*

HERDER says, "There is no attribute, no perfection of God left unexpressed, in the simplest and most powerful manner, in the Psalms and the Prophets." In fact, we can hardly realize how much energy and freshness the Christian belief in God would lose, were the lofty and eternal expressions of the Psalms on the being and attributes of God withdrawn from the Christian Church.

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How many of such forcibles passages, stamped upon our memory since infancy's tender age, have entered into our emotions and thoughts, and often quite unconsciously originated those representations of God which we feel inclined to regard as the *natural* expression of every human heart. Here that God is praised, who, before the mountains, the earth, and the world had been created, is from everlasting to everlasting—who surrounds his creatures, inquiring everywhere—whose presence cannot be avoided, whether in heaven above, or the depth below—from whom darkness cannot hide—who reigns as the Lord omnipotent, from the beginning, in the heavens—who thunders in his might—who telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names—who is good unto all, has compassion on all his works, and giveth food to the young ravens which cry—who delighteth not in the strength of the horse nor the legs of a man, but taketh pleasure in them that fear him and hope in his mercy—who, like as a father pitieth his children, pitieth those that fear him, and dealeth not with us after our sins, nor rewardeth us according to our iniquities. Whatever truths and praises can be said of the wisdom, eternity, omnipotence, holiness, and mercy of God, are expressed in the Psalms, such as Psalms xc. xci. xcvii. xxxiii. ciii. civ. and cxxxix. Here is a piety which, on the one hand losing itself full of praise in the care of God, as in Psalm cxix., preserves on the other, a clear and opened eye for his glory in nature, before whose view the declaration in the book of the law and that in the book of nature entirely commingle, *e. g.* Psalm xix. Here we have the unceasing praise of God —in gloomy as well as in joyous days, for mercies temporal and spiritual—in every variety of tone and expression. The last psalms (cxlvii. cxlviii. and cl.), the many-toned echo of the entire book, or like the end of a long chain call with their unceasing "Praise ye the Lord," upon Israel and all mankind, the heights and the depths and the heavenly spirits, to offer the sacrifice of their praise to the Lord. Those who adhere to the erroneous opinion (Psalms xxix. civ. cxlv.) that the God of Israel was the God of the nation only in that sense, that the people believed, besides Him, in other though impotent heathen deities, may derive more correct views from the Psalms. "For God is the King *of all the earth:* sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over *the heathen:* God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness." (Psalm xlvii. 7, 8.) "O God of our salvation, *who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.*" (Psalm lxv. 5.) "Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: *thou art God alone.*" (Psalm lxxxvi. 8—10.) Because, says the Psalmist, God has created the heathen, therefore they shall come

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and worship before him. He says (verse 8), "Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord;" and yet, in verse 10, "Thou art God alone." Is this not sufficient to indicate how passages are to be taken, in which it is certainly said, that God is greater than any other god? (Psalms xcv. 3; lxxvii. 14; xcvii. 9.) What else does it mean, but that all who are regarded as gods are nothing when compared with Him? This is distinctly asserted in Psalm xcvi. 5: "All the gods of the nations are idols (*i. e.* nonentities:) but the Lord made the heavens." With this corresponds the language of the prophets. So it is said in Jeremiah xxvii. 5: "*I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground*, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and *have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.*" So in Deut x. 14; iv. 39: "*Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth* (*also,*) *with all that therein is.*" "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: (*there*) *is none else.*"

Contrasted with the gods of the heathen, which are less than their worshippers, which have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not—the God of Israel appears as the living God, who governs the world, and that in *righteousness;* who maintaineth the right and cause of the innocent, and sitteth enthroned as the righteous Judge, (Psalm ix. 5;) who throweth the ungodly into the ditch, and causeth their desire to perish, (Psalms vii. 17; cxii. 10;) who preserveth the soul of His saints, and delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked, (Psalm xcvii. 10;) who heareth the cry of the righteous, (Psalm xxxiv. 18;) delivereth them out of all trouble, and maketh their eyes to see their desire upon their enemies, (Psalm liv. 9;) who causeth the godly to prosper in whatsoever he doeth, (Psalm i. 3,) wealth and riches to be in his house, (Psalm cxii. 3,) that they shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied, (Psalm xxxvii. 16;) for "I have been young, and now I am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." (Psalm xxvii. 25.) All these things are continually being repeated in the course of the world, though frequently the contrary really takes or seems to take place, so that expressions like those quoted, will both edify and startle pious readers. It is necessary for their right understanding first to inspect those passages, which show that the Psalmist, no less than we, had to realize the experience of innocence being crushed, and malice triumphant, of virtue struggling with poverty and wretchedness, and of wickedness revelling in abundance. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree." (Psalm xxxvii. 35.) "The ways of the wicked prosper always: thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them." (Psalm x. 5.) "The wicked des-

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troy the foundations, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm xi. 3.) Asaph says, that his steps had almost slipped at the sight of the undisturbed prosperity of the wicked, when it seemed as if he had cleansed his heart in vain and washed his hands in innocency to no purpose. (Psalm lxiii. 1—15.) Had not David to empty the cup of sorrow for ten years and to bear privation and peril? But what is the meaning of the assurances that God is ruling the world, causing the prosperity of the righteous, and throwing the wicked into their own net? They simply mean that "right is right after all" (this is Luther's rendering of Psalm xciv. 15,) "*tandem bona causa triumphat.*" They express the truths so deeply inscribed upon the hearts of all men, and confirmed by revelation, that the Divine government of the world is based on justice, that evil is ever condemned by its indestructible laws, and that its condemnation will sooner or later be made manifest. For the further elucidation of the before quoted passages, we should add such as these: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." "He will not leave for ever the righteous in trouble." (Ps. lv. 22.) "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." (Ps. xxxiv. 20.) "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." (Ps. xcvii. 11.) "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness, from Him who is gracious, and full of compassion and righteous." (Ps. cxii. 4.) But *when* is that light to rise? Very often here on earth, after weeks, or years, and if not to the fathers yet to their children. (Ps. cii. 29.) "God overturns the measure of the ungodly, when it gets full." "When wrong gets too insolent, it commits suicide." "Man proposes, but God disposes." "Lightly come, lightly go." "Ill-gotten gains don't prosper." "Took by fraud, comes to naught." "Honest gain will ever remain." "The world's the world after all; depend on it, and you're sure to fall." "Avarice gathers itself poor, charity pays itself rich." "Honesty is the best policy." Could these proverbs have originated with the people, if there were no temporal revelations of a righteous government of the world? We hear the voice of experience when David says, that he had not seen the seed of the righteous begging for bread, but that he had beheld the sudden disappearance of the wicked, though he spread himself like a green bay-tree, (Ps. xxxvii. 25. 36;) and Asaph states: "Then understood I their end: surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors." (Ps. lxxiii. 17—19.) The truly pious and upright man is a faithful friend, a kind neighbour, a conscientious citizen, a careful parent, and diligent at his occupation: is it conceivable that his descendants should be reduced to penury and find no friends! (Cf. ad. Ps. xxxvii. 25, and Ps. i.) The ungodly, on the other hand, who

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rears his fortune by wrong means, can hardly be said to attain to pure joy, while he has more dangerous enemies in his passions than amongst his numerous adversaries: how easily may he fall from his height! Cases which compel children to return their parents' ill-gotten gain are of frequent occurrence. The laws of the Divine government of the world, however, are analogous to those of summer and winter, sunshine and rain, health and disease, youth and old age, and many other things. Considered in the aggregate they may be referred to certain rules and arrangements, though they apply not always in particular instances. But as in our present state of probation, the full revelation of the justice of God is held in check by his long-suffering, that the field of the world might exhibit both wheat and tares, (Rom. ii. 4; Matt. xiii. 30,) so all the particular judgments of God refer for their consummation to the last judgment. Although the expectations of the Old Testament saints respecting the future were on the whole concealed in darkness, there are nevertheless distinct references to the last judgment to be found in the Prophets and the Psalms. *See* Ps. i. 5, 6; xxxvii. 37, 38; xvii. 14, 15; xlix. 15, 16; lxxiii. 23, 24; xcvi. 13; xcviii. 9, in the Commentary. The belief in the justice of the Divine government of the world expressed by the Psalmists, yields therefore on the one hand the character of *hope* with respect to the future, and shows on the other that it derived its nourishment from the daily experience of the *present*. To this let us add the following. Every attempt to determine the limits within which Divine justice is wont or able to reveal itself as a universal law, would be labour lost. The history of the Jewish nation in general, of the kingdom of Judah and Israel in particular, and the fate of the Jews down to the present time, show the more regular appearance of such revelations in certain cycles; moreover, the descent to sensible revelations belongs to the character of the ancient economy: now, does all this not entitle us to the assumption, that the Divine government of the world was wont even in the case of individuals more frequently than with us, to crown piety with blessings and requite injustice with curse? Thus much is certain, that the Prophets did not confine the announcement of Divine judgments to nations, but proclaimed them to individuals, when sin was followed by immediate punishment. (*E. g.* Isa. xxii. 15, *etc.*; Jer. xxviii.; 2 Sam. xxiv. 12, 13.) This explains the confidence with which the Psalmists insist upon the principle that the good can never fare ill.

II.—*Man and Sin.*

Our apprehension of the majesty and holiness of God should be accompanied by a sense of our own nothingness and sin. The Psalmist, alluding to the statement in Genesis, speaks of man *as*

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made a little lower than God, (Luther,) that God hath put all things under his feet, and glories in the fact that man, though externally more helpless than any other creature, does by virtue of his Godlike soul wield the government of nature. (Ps. viii.) Yet how defective is that dominion at present! (*Vide* ad. Ps. viii. 7.) How small is the *manifestation* of that dignity, the *capacity* of which man certainly possesses; how circumscribed and humbling his present bodily existence; how much exposed to accident and how soon destroyed! Hence the same David says, "The Lord knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Ps. ciii. 14—16.) "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity." (Ps. lxii. 9.) And in the eighth Psalm, which celebrates the dignity of man, he exclaims in contemplation of the infinity and greatness of God in his works, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Thus do the Psalms speak of the impotency and finiteness of man. This our perishable condition is by no means the necessary and absolute barrier of created existence, but the effect of internal discord originated by sin. It manifests "the wrath of God because of sin." (Cf. Ps. xc. 7—9.) The authors of the Psalms are so alive to a sense of guilt, that the voice of their conscience is audible amid all the accidental trials and sorrows of life and the mischiefs perpetrated by enemies, and that they acknowledge the justice of the Divine chastisements. (Ad. Ps. xxxviii. 21; cxli. 5.) They feel themselves not entitled to the reception of Divine blessings without the confession of their unworthiness. The exultant spring song of praise in Psalm lxv. is preceded by a confession of sin.* They acknowledge that were God to enter into judgment with man, and to mark his iniquities, none could stand before him; (Ps. cxxx. 3; cxliii. 2; cf. 1 Kings viii. 46; Eccl. vii. 21; Job ix. 2; xiv. 4; xv. 14–16;) that unconscious sin, regarded as a condition which apparently contradicts the original of a pure and holy human kind, needs the Divine forgiveness; that sinfulness does not enter into our nature by imitation from without, but that it is in us from the first stages of our existence. (Ps. li. 7.) Far from seeking a ground for justification in our native depravity, David made that confession to indicate the sincerity of his repentance and to show that he was alive to the full extent of his guilt. What an evidence of the *depth* of the perception of sin is furnished in expressions of pain and grief like those in Psalm xxxii. "My bones waxed old

* De Wette concludes that the people had experienced some national calamity, and that the Psalm was composed in exile.

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through my roaring all the day long: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."* While natural reason talks only of trespasses against the moral law or man, and on that account remains so cold at the commission of sin, every transgression is regarded in the *Psalms* as a trespass against the Divine word and the living God, whose will originates the moral law. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin *against thee*." (Ps. cxix. 11.) Conscious of his greatest offence against man, he cries, "Against *thee, thee only*, have I sinned," rightly apprehending that the most objectionable element of sin is its encroachment upon the Divine law and the proof of man's wilful separation from and opposition to God. Where is to be found a more touching confession of a guilt-convicted conscience than in Psalm xxxii. 3, 4? "When I kept silence (intended to conceal,) my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." The Psalmists occasionally speak of innocence and the purity of their hands, (Ps. vii. 9; xviii. 21—26; xvii. 3; xxvi. 2—6; xli. 13,) but the preceding observations clearly show that they refer not to absolute integrity before God, but rather to guiltlessness towards *man*. In Psalm xxxviii. the experience of affliction awakes a painful sense of guilt in David, and yet he gives expression to the consciousness of his innocence. He says (Ps. lxix. 4,) "They that hate me without a cause, are more than the hairs of mine head," and then adds, "O God, *thou* knowest my foolishness: and my sins are not hid from *thee*." (Cf. in Ps. xxv. verses 7. 11. 18, with verses 19—21, and in Ps. xli. verse 5 with verse 13.) The assertion of his purity in Psalm xvii. 3, 4, is preceded by "Let my sentence come forth from thy presence: let thine eyes behold the things that are equal." It is incontestably clear from Psalm vii. 3—5, that David refers in verse 8, "Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to mine integrity, that is in me," to righteousness and integrity in relation to specific accusations. And if such were not the case, might not a man, while assuring us of the sincerity of his piety, be at the same time conscious of daily failings and multiform guilt? Such sincerity shows itself when we delight in the commandments of God, and strive to obey them; though the surmounting of obstacles

* Contemplating passages of Scripture so solemn, we are, against our inclination, reminded of the folly of interpreters. As, however, benefit may accrue from knowing with what impure hands interpreting theologians have touched this book, and to show our *sympathy* with the distress of the Church in this respect, let us adduce an instance: A. W. Krahmer, a modern interpreter, (The Psalms Translated and Interpreted, Leips. 1837, vol. i. p. 90,) says that David could not have been the author of this psalm (Ps. xxxii.), "*Because he was then not a fever patient, but well and in good health.*"

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constitutes the business of this life. Who would have expected a confession of sin (Ps. xl. 12,) after the description of a heart so completely resigned to the will of God, as that which precedes it? The same Asaph who declares God to be his sole consolation and portion, was not far from joining in the outrage of the wicked, "that there is no righteous God in heaven." (Ps. lxxiii.) How frequently occur expressions like these: "I will keep thy statutes. I will not forget thy word," in Psalm cxix.; but that prevents not David from praying, "Let thy merciful kindness be for my comfort." (Ps. cxix. 76.) It is to be noticed, that however much the Psalmists refer to their integrity, they never *demand*, but *supplicate* aid and deliverance at the hands of the righteous God: that they hope in that *name* by which the Lord had named himself (Exod. xxxiv. 6,) "Merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." (Psalms xxxi. 4; xl. 12; lxix. 30: cxix. 77; xli. 4; xxv. 11; lii. 11; lxxix. 9; ciii. 8; cxlv. 8.

III.—*The Piety and Morality of the Psalmists.*

Piety is the sense of the relation of our dependence on God. It may be *servile*, accompanied by a sense of *fear* and *separation* from God; or child-like, accompanied by *love*, *reconciliation* to, and *unity* with God. When the thought of Divine justice enters into a sinner's consciousness, his being *afraid* of God will be proportioned to his realizing the estrangement of his heart from God. The Psalmist expresses that fear in almost appalling terms: "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee." (Psalms cxix. cxx.) But when God reveals himself to sinful man as gracious and forgiving, while his conscience in spite of his faults and infirmities testifies to his desire to obey the Divine commandments, love and the condition of peace with God will ensue. The institution of sacrifices for the atonement of sins of error and weakness had revealed God to his people as the forgiver of sins; and in the important passage in Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7, he proclaimed his name as "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." The revelation of the God of love avowing blessings to the pious down to the thousandth, and punishment to the ungodly (Cf. Psalm ciii. 17, 18, notes,) down to the third and the fourth generation, was well adapted to kindle reciprocal love in the hearts of the children of Israel. The Psalms show that the Old Testament saints stood to God in the relation of love to a much greater extent than we imagine. Who can remain untouched on hearing the words of David at the begin-

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ning of the Psalm of thanksgiving, which he sung towards the close of his life, and which may be regarded as the result of his experience of life? "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." (Psalm xviii. 1.) "Thou art my Lord, all my goods I prefer not to thee." (Psalm xvi. 2.) "This I know, for *God is for me.*" No Christian could describe in sweeter language the peace of reconciliation than we find it done in Psalms xvi. xxiii. ciii. lxxiii. xxvi. xxvii. lxxi. 14—24, *etc.* How happy must have been their communion with God who say, "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings, they are abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou makest them drink of the river of thy pleasures." (Psalm xxxvi. 8, 9.) "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; he shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." (Psalm lxv. 5.) "Thy lovingkindness is better than life—when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." (Psalm lxiii. 4. 7.) It is always the mark of a strong and healthy divine life, when the traces of God are recognized in surrounding nature. Do classical songs celebrate the traces of God in nature? The Psalms contain the sublimest and most fervent praises of the majesty of God which is everywhere revealed in nature. (Cf. sec. iv. l. on God and the Government of the World.) From the relation to God springs the relation to his law. All must bow to his law, either *willingly* or *unwillingly*. So the Jews of the Old Testament were mostly coerced to the keeping of the covenant of God; (Jer. xxxi. 32;) but there were many who *loved* the lawgiver as well as his law. The Psalms furnish most remarkable evidences of this kind: they begin with Psalm i.:—the law is described as the *delight* of man: as sweeter than honey and the honeycomb: as the riches, the peculiar portion and possession of the pious: as the song in the house of his pilgrimage (Psalms xix. 8—11, cxix. 54. 56, 57. 103. 111.) Is it possible to find an instance of more thorough absorption of the human will in the law of God than this? "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (Psalm xl. 9.) We are therefore entitled to the assumption, that morality of the purest kind, as the effect of filial love to God, formed part of the obedience of the Old Testament saints. The depth of their convictions of sin on the one hand, and their fervent sense of intimacy and communion with God on the other, must also have led to the knowledge that virtue could only exist under and by such a combination. The Psalms declare that only in God's light can man see light, (Psalm xxxvi. 9,) and that God fashioneth the hearts of men. (Psalm xxxiii. 15.) The pious singers pray to be guided by the light and counsel of God: to be led through the paths of his commandments: and to be kept by the

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mercy of God, when their feet begin to slip. (Psalms xliii. 8; cxxxix. 24; v. 9; xxv. 5; xxvii. 11; cxix. 35; xciv. 18.) They beg for the Spirit of God as the source of their strength for every kind of good. (Psalms li. 13; cxliii. 10.)

We must, however, not apprehend the filial relationship of the Old Testament saints as uninterrupted and continuous: every grave transgression tended to banish it, and it could not be regained without severe struggles. David mourns at being since his fall deprived of "a constant spirit," "the spirit of joy," and "the help of God." (Ps. li. 12, *etc.* in Luther's version.) The intensity of internal discord under such circumstances, is proportioned to the distinct apprehension, that sacrifices have no atoning virtues in themselves, but possess only a typical meaning, (Psalm li. 18, 19.) that the real sacrifice is the offering of our will to God, and the reception of his law into our hearts. (Psalm xl. 7—9.) Faith, however, always conquers despondency, and the Spirit stamps the assurance of the forgiveness of specific transgressions so powerfully even on the minds of individuals, that David afterwards exclaims, full of confidence, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Psalm xxxii. 1.) Two questions arise in connection with this subject. How could forgiveness take place before the atonement of our Lord Jesus? and could the Old Testament saints be called regenerated? Those who put the first, forget that successive events in *time* are eternally *present* before God: hence Paul's mighty declaration, that from before the creation of man, yea, from before the foundation of the world, God chose believers in Christ to holiness. (Eph. i. 4.) The whole of God's relationship to man rests therefore on the presumption of an eternal objective atonement in Christ. Regarding the second question, it is well known that the Lutheran Church sets forth regeneration as embodying *repentance* and *faith in Jesus Christ.* The Old Testament saints could not have that faith, because Christ had not been preached to them: it might be said that they believed in the Messiah, but, everything else abstracted, they do not associate the forgiveness of their sins with the Messiah. Therefore regeneration applies only in so far to Old Testament saints, that there were some in whom the consciousness of repentance and peace with God predominated: though that could not by any means be so confirmed and clear an inward condition as it is with believers in the gospel of the incarnate Saviour.

The moral attitude towards their enemies has always formed an objection to the morality of the Psalmists. Instead of the mild voice of placability and compassion, we hear the tumult of revenge, and prayers for the condemnation of their enemies. Augustine already felt its offensiveness and endeavoured to palliate it by observing, that there was no reference to the *wishes* of the Psalmists, but to predictions of such of God's visitations, which were

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doubtlessly suspended over confirmed sinners. (Opp. v. Sermo. 22; also Luther ad. Psalm lv.) In modern times the opinion seems to obtain, that love to enemies is enjoined as a duty in the New Testament only. The gratuitousness of that opinion is apparent from consulting correct translations of Lev. xix. 18; Ex. xxiii. 4, 5; Prov. xxiv. 17, 18. 29; xxv. 21, 22; Job xxxi. 29; Sirach xxviii. 1—11. To form a right estimate of the misgivings alluded to, we should consider the *end contemplated by punishment.* The common view is that with God and the pious punishment springs from *love* and contemplates the improvement of man. But what is to be done if you have to deal with an incorrigible sinner? If this is denied as positively true, its possibility ought to be admitted, and should even that be objected to, provision ought to be made for the case which renders improvement within a fixed period of time inconceivable, because a better system of control is to be waited for. Nobody, methinks, would maintain that the consolidation of man's impenitence ought to cancel his liability to punishment, especially because, supposing him freed from positive punishment, the so-called *natural* punishment, viz. internal discord or spiritual death, is sure to visit him with an increased force according to the measure of his obstinacy. The *end* of improvement therefore cannot exhaust the purpose of punishment. Philosophy agrees with Christianity, that the specific purpose of punishment is *retribution; i. e.* the welfare of the individual is to be disturbed in the same measure as he has disturbed or infringed upon the law of God or the State. Hence it appears that to deny the punishment of a hardened sinner (not on personal ground, but from a sense of the holiness of the Divine law,) is as little to be regarded as evidencing moral imperfection, as it would be to desire that those who are susceptible for improvement, should by means of correctives be brought to their senses. The objection is met, if it can be shown that the imprecations and prayers for Divine punishment do not flow from the vindictive disposition (viz. personal irritability and passion) of the Psalmists, but from the motives just now alluded to. Those supplications would then correspond to the earnest desire of a good monarch or a just judge to discover the guilty that justice might be administered, and the expressions of David, the private individual, ought to be referred to those noble motives which developed the principles he uttered when a king. (Ps. ci. 8.) We are constrained to assume this in the case at least of David's Psalms, from having first perused the historic record of his *deeds*, which more than any words breathe a forgiving disposition, we pass on to the reading of his psalms. If his *acts* were untainted by vindictive passion, is it likely that it should only attach to his words? But we find many expressions in unison with his deeds; *e. g.* "If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me, (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:) let the

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enemy persecute my soul and take it: yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth." (Ps. vii. 5, 6.) Here again he refers to the same persecution, (Ps. cxli. 5:) "Let the righteous (God) smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head, for yet my prayer shall be at their offences." "They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I afflicted my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into mine own bosom." (Ps. xxxv. 12, 13.) So in Psalm xxxviii. 21, "They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries: because I follow the thing that good is." "For my love, they are my adversaries; but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love." (Ps. cix. 4, 5.) The didactic Psalm xxxvii. opens with "Fret not thyself (get not angry) because of evil doers." Now when the same man calls, (Ps. vii. 35,) upon God as Judge, and utters in Psalm cix. imprecations, it is but fair to refer his thirst for the punishment of sin to purer motives than personal vindictive passion. We are indeed for the most part enabled to judge of the source from which his prayers for punishment flow. There uniformly exist motives similar to those so sublimely expressed in Psalm lxiv. 10, 11, "And all men shall fear and shall declare, *It is the Lord's work;* and they shall wisely mark his doing. The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him: and all the upright in heart shall glory."

The Psalmists frequently state sentiments like the following as the motives of their prayers for the punishment of their enemies: that the holiness of God and his righteous government of the world should be acknowledged, that the faith of the pious should be strengthened, that they should praise God, that the haughtiness of the ungodly should be brought within bounds, that they should know that God is the righteous judge of the world, and that the fulfilment of his glorious promises should not fail. (Psalm v. 11, 12; ix. 20, 21; xii. 9; xxviii. 4, 5; xxii. 23—32; xxxv. 24; xl. 17; lix. 14; cix. 27; cxlii. 8.) Aye, they even boast of their hatred against their enemies, because "THEY HATE GOD." (Psalm cxxxix. 21.) Offence may be taken at their straightway putting down their own enemies as those of God. But what evidence have we that they do it *straightway?* Returning to David, who is prepared to deny the impiousness of the two chief sections of his persecutors? A king passionate to madness, breathing slaughter against his son-in-law to whom he was greatly indebted; courtiers thirsting for blood, like a Doeg, who on no other ground than that of gaining the favour of his sovereign could kill eighty helpless priests; or an Ahithophel, beguiling Absalom to revolt against his father and to stain the honour of royalty, (2 Sam. xvi. 21;) in sight of wickedness so great, David may well advocate the claims

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of God. Confining ourselves to the general meaning of the term "enemies," the description in the Psalms may often appear overdrawn. We should realize the fact, that in certainly most instances reference is made to vile traitors of a sanguinary disposition, to rebels and assassins; and that in some places David speaks as *king*, who as a ruler is obliged to wield the sword which God has entrusted to his keeping. This applies to Psalm lviii. which is distinguished for its many imprecations, and to all the psalms which refer to Absalom, *e. g.* Psalm lxiii. We do not even in the New Testament meet with absolute forgiving love either in God or his servants. The wrath of God is said to abide on those who believe not on his Son, (John iii. 36:) that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God:" that "God is a consuming fire." (Heb. x. 31; xii. 29.) In terms not less offensive than those in the Psalms, Christ announces judgment to the *cursed*, (Matt. xxv. 41,) and foretells the judgment of God to those who had rejected the Son. (Matt. xxi. 41, 44; Luke xxiii. 29, 30.) Was it not Peter who, in the name of God, announced death to Ananias and Sapphira, and did not the event show that his speech was far from being idle passion? Did he not say to Simon the sorcerer, in holy indignation, "Thy money perish with thee," yet not without adding, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness"? (Acts viii. 20. 22.) Did not Paul strike Elymas the sorcerer with blindness, and call him a child of the devil? Did he not solemnly "deliver unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (1 Cor. v. 5,) the wicked Corinthian who had married his step-mother, and say, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works"? (2 Tim. iv. 14.) As a proof that these were not the expressions of the Apostle's personal passion, we refer to his affectionate advocacy in behalf of the Corinthian evil-doer, after he had heard of his improvement, (2 Cor. ii.) and to his saying concerning the very persons who had deserted him during his defence at the tribunal, immediately after the threatening statement about Alexander, "May it not be laid to their charge." (2 Tim. iv. 16.) The Lord said to his two disciples, who (it seems not from personal passion but from pure love to their Master) desired fire to descend from heaven, and to consume the Samaritans "as Elias did:" "Know ye not what manner of spirit ye are of?" (Luke ix. 55.) They said it from love to Christ: but are vindictive feelings *for the sake of others* impossible? It does not follow that their anger was pure, because it arose in behalf of another. The "*ye*" occurs in the original in a position which emphasises and places it in antithesis to "Elias." It would then appear that our Lord declared the inferiority of the legal position of the Old Testament, not because the desire of retribution ought to be excluded from the religion of reconciliation, but because it ought not to predominate in it. The question may finally arise,

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Are we then compelled to assume that the unhallowed flame of personal passion did in no case blend with the holy fire of the Psalmists? We cannot even say this of the Apostles. (Acts xv. 29; xxiii. 3; Phil. iii. 2; Gal. v. 2.) Whether the anger of impassioned speech be such "which worketh not the righteousness of God," (James i. 20,) or such as was felt by Christ (Mark iii. 2) himself, may generally be gathered from its nature, when delight transpires at the thought of being permitted to be the instrument of Divine retribution, when specific kinds of retribution are prayed for with evident satisfaction, or when the thought of retribution is regarded with complacency by the speaker, *etc.* Several expressions in Psalms cix. and lix. bear the stamp of passion: so do Psalms cxlix. 7, 8; cxxxvii. 8, 9; lviii. 11;—xli. 11, may have flowed from such a disposition. Different individuals will hold different views on other psalms. The vindictive psalms respecting the heathen, as *e. g.* Psalm lxxix. 6, "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee; and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name," suggest particular considerations. The victory of the heathen over Israel threatened indeed the destruction of true religion. Read the impassioned description of the Chaldean conquest of the country (Psalm lxxiv.): the heathen triumphantly asked, "Where is now their God?" (Ps. lxxix. 10;) while on the other hand at the victories of Israel the sanctuary at Jerusalem was honoured with gifts of foreign nations, the power of the God of Israel acknowledged, and Messianic hopes awakened. (Com. ad. Psalm lxxvi. lxxxvii.) Besides all this, it should be observed that hatred against a nation as a whole excludes not kindly sympathy towards individuals, as shown by the more noble custom of war at all times, in even religious wars, such as the Crusades. An instance of this kind occurs in 2 Kings vi. 22. From this point of view even Lessing once advocated the so-called vindictive Psalms.*

* During Lessing's residence at Hamburg, a violent attack was made upon the Rev. Mr. Goetge, who resisted a proposition to cancel from the fast-day prayer the words, "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name." Lessing, who from a predilection for the stage had forsaken the pulpit, composed just then a sermon—a sermon! aye, and on the very text, Psalm lxxix. 6, after the manner of Sterne, entitled, Sermon from two texts, Psalm lxxix. 6, "Pour out," *etc.* and Matt. xxii. 39, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," by Yorick, translated from the English. He had only a few copies printed, his object being to show to the conceited modernisers that there were others more clever than they, and sent one copy to their leader, the Rev. Alberti. Nicolai says that Alberti took fright, declaring that a man like Lessing was not to be trifled with, and that he was afraid of the effect of the sermon on the public. Lessing suppressed the pamphlet at his instance. The preface only has been preserved; but Lessing's meaning is clear. This was the story: "Colonel Shandy and his faithful Trim went out for a walk. They found

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IV.—*The Future.*

Christianity neither refers to "the *beyond*" the grave, nor to *continuation* after death. Christian hope, *i. e. faith applied to the future*, has for its object *the completion of the kingdom of God*, of which it may be said with equal truth that it has come and has not yet come. Its completion will be threefold. At its completion *all who are ordained to it shall be received into it*, so that the body of Christ shall be complete: *the dominion of God in the heart of individuals shall be complete, and the power of sin cancelled: the outward shall correspond to the inward*, for the outward should be the display or manifestation of the inward, which would imply the cessation of discord and evil. The Messianic psalms contemplate this latter object, and as the kingdom of God cannot be said to have absolutely come before the end of time, so cannot those prophecies be said to have met their proper fulfilment before then. The departing Christian therefore is not to expect *perfect* bliss immediately after death, but in the future at the end of the present dispensation. In so far, however, as Christ has already effected his communion with God this side the grave, there is in store for him, if not complete, at all events some kind of bliss immediately after death. A certain degree of bliss after death must therefore be assumed in the case of the Old Testament saints, who enjoyed communion with God here below, though certainly less complete than theirs whose communion with God was effected by Christ. On that account the ancient Church used to represent the condition of the Old Testament saints beyond the grave as a twilight, *limbus patrum*, in which they were waiting for Christ, as it is said of Abraham, that he rejoiced to see the day of Christ. Their fear of death, as expressed in several psalms, but most

on the road a starved man in a ragged French uniform, sustaining himself on a crutch, because he had one foot maimed. With his eye silently bent to the ground, he took off his hat; but his melancholic look spoke for him. The colonel gave him several shillings without counting them. Trim pulled a penny from his pocket, and presenting it, said, 'French dog.' The colonel kept silence for some seconds, and then said, turning to Trim, 'Trim, he is a man, and not a dog.' The French invalid had followed them. In answer to the colonel's speech, Trim gave him another penny, and again said, 'French Dog.' 'And Trim, he is a soldier.' Trim stared, gave another penny, and said, 'French dog.' 'And Trim, he has fought for his country, and been severely wounded.' Trim pressed his hand, giving another penny, and said, 'French dog.' 'And Trim, this soldier is a good and unhappy husband, has a wife and four uneducated children.' Trim, with a tear in his eye, gave all he had left in his pocket, and said, though in a low voice, 'French dog.' On reaching home he conferred on this topic with Yorick. Yorick said, 'It is evident Trim hates the whole nation which is hostile to his country, but he knows how to love each individual of it when he is worthy of his love.' This gave occasion to Yorick's preaching the following sermon."

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strongly in Psalm lxxxviii. ought therefore not to startle us. A pious Israelite could realize full joy only in view of that ultimate future, when the great festival of joy is to take place on Mount Zion, and all the dead are to march forth from their silent chamber. (Isaiah xxv. 6; xxvi. 19.) The account which we possess of Enoch (Gen. v. 24,) shows at how early a period the opinion prevailed that death could not interrupt that communion with God which the godly enjoyed with him on earth. Our Lord's argument for immortality, in reply to the tempting question of the Sadducees, which he cited from the Pentateuch, (Matt. xxii. 32; Luke xx. 37, 38,) alludes profoundly to the connection subsisting between earthly communion with God and future blessedness. (Cf. Heb. xi. 16.) If the Eternal (such is our Saviour's meaning) has entered into so close a communion with man, that he calls himself *his* God, how can such a relation be only of a temporal and transitory nature? We ask further, Why should man, enjoying intimate communion with God, not be sensible of the *eternity* of his relation to him? Since Christ refers to "eternal life" as beginning on earth, and attaining to perfection beyond the grave, may not the Old Testament saints, at times of their most intimate communion with God, have equally possessed the presentiment, nay, the certainty of its *eternity?* Is it likely that the man who, while the subject of continuous tribulation and intense agony of soul, could exclaim, "This I know, *God is mine!*" (Psalm lvi. 10. See also Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26,) should believe that all would be over with death? If a Psalmist derives consolation from "dwelling in the house of the Lord for ever," and says of the pious that "like a green olive tree they abide in the house of God, and trust in the mercy of God, for ever and ever," (Psalm lii. 10, 11,) and if, as is shown in the commentary on the respective passages, the abiding in the house of God designates "*indissolubility of communion with God*," is it not clear that the pledge of the Spirit wrought a confidence in the mind of the Psalmists extending beyond the grave? Taking such prophetic moments for granted, may we not equally assume, that sentiments embodying in a general way thoughts like this, "Continue upright, for the end of that man is peace, but the transgressors shall be destroyed altogether," and similar ones expressing God's unfailing judgment of the impious, gave rise to presentiments extending beyond the grave? The expressions of such hopes are, however, met with; their somewhat scanty occurrence may be sufficiently explained on the assumption, that the dawning of such hopes was linked to the holiest moments of their spiritual life. We may quote Psalm xlviii. 15, "Yea, this God is our God for ever and ever, *he will guide us beyond death.*" (Psalm lxviii. 21 is held in more general terms.) Still more explicit are Psalms lxix. 16; xvi. 8—11; xvii. 14, 15; lxxiii. 23, 24. The strong distinction which these pas-

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sages draw between the worldly-minded who have their consolation in this world, and the children of God, renders any other interpretation inadmissible. It is truly remarkable that just these Psalms, more than any others, express the utmost sense of oneness with and happiness in God.

V.—*The Messiah.*

The prophets of the Old Testament have predicted a time, when Israel covered with the spirit of grace and supplication (Zech. xii. 10,) should become a righteous people and inherit the land for ever, (Isaiah lx. 21,) when the old covenant to the observance of which they had to be *coerced* should cease, and the law be written in their hearts, (Jeremiah xxxi. 31—33,) when all nations of the earth should flow to Zion, call upon the name of the Lord, and serve him with one consent. (Isaiah ii; Zeph. iii. 9.) David, the servant of God, should be raised, in the person of an offspring of David, who in the capacity of the good shepherd should feed the people of God; a covenant of peace should be made with universal nature, which ceasing to be hurtful to man, should thenceforth minister to his comfort. (Ezekiel xxxiv. 23—31) "It would be inexplicable," says a modern commentator, (Kœster, ad. Psalm lxxii. p. 113,) "were the Psalms to contain no reference to an idea of such paramount importance to the Jewish religion as that of the Messiah." Since the Psalms as lyrical poems express those religious sentiments which the faith of the people, taught by the law and the prophets, was calculated to inspire, it would indeed be strange, if the prophetic article of faith of the Messiah were absent from their prayers. The more so, as we know from David's last song (which is preserved in 2 Sam. xxiii.) that Messianic hopes animated his soul and entered into his poems. We insert that passage, because important to our estimate and understanding of the Messianic prophecies of David:*

"David the son of Jesse, said,
"The man raised up on high said,
"The anointed of the God of Jacob,
"And the sweet Psalmist of Israel:
"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,
"And his word was in my tongue,

* Luther's Translation, esp. of v. 3. misleads: so do the Vulg. Syr. and LXX. The Chaldee paraphrase inserts the Messiah, but forcibly. We agree in the main with Tremellius, de Wette, F. of Meyer, cf. also the Engl. version. On translating with Ewald (The Pract. Books of the Old Testament, vol. i. p. 100,) "When one is ruling justly over men, when one is ruling in the fear of God, it is as when it grows light of a morning," the possibility of a Messianic allusion is certainly avoided, but v. 5 shows also this rendering to be equally inadmissible.

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"The God of Israel said,
"The Rock of Israel spake to me:
"A ruler over men in righteousness,
"A ruler in the fear of God.
"As the sun riseth at the light of the morning,
"Even on a morning without clouds,
"As the tender grass springing out of the earth
"By clear shining after rain.
"Although my house be not so with God:
"Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant
"Ordered in all things and sure,
"For all my salvation and all my desire, doth not
"He make it to grow?
"But the ungodly shall be all of them as thorns thrust away,
"Because they cannot be taken with hands,
"But the man that shall touch them
"Must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear,
"And they shall be utterly burned with fire on the spot."

We gather in the first place from this passage that David felt himself conscious of being Divinely inspired, especially when speaking of the Messiah. Our Lord confirms this (Matt. xxii. 43,) with reference to Psalm cx. The Psalmists are also elsewhere conscious of Divine influence. (Psalm xlix. 5; xii. 6.) We gather, again, that the fundamental prophecy in 2 Sam. vii. 12—16, became in his prophetic moments *more distinctly developed to him*. On his first hearing it, he was greatly affected by the thought of the perpetuity of regal dignity among his offspring. "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" he exclaims with touching humility, "and this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God: but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"* No other and no loftier thought than that of a perpetual progeny on the throne of his kingdom did probably then enter his mind: in Psalm lxxxix. 30. 37, the promise is similarly understood, and in Psalm xviii. 50, he praises God, "who showeth mercy to David, His anointed, and to his seed for evermore." Those, however, who consult history, and believe in a connection of revelation between the Old and New Testaments, as well as in the gift of prophecy, are sensible that in those words the Spirit of God referred to Him in whom the promise became fulfilled. (Luke i. 32, 33.) This view may be held, though the main essence of the prophecies made to him should have been concealed from David during his lifetime, as *e. g.* Peter may never

* According to 1 Chron. xvii. 17, "And hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree."

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until the last moments of his existence have understood the meaning of our Lord's prophecy concerning his end. (John xxi. 18.) The Prophets did certainly apprehend the more profound sense. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days and at that time, I will cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David: and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. For thus saith the Lord: David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel." (Jer. xxxiii. 14, *etc.*) Cf. what is said Isaiah xi. 1, *etc.* of the rod out of the stem of Jesse. It cannot be denied that the prophets knew that the prediction should meet its ultimate fulfilment in the *One* great descendant of David. But was that knowledge hid from David? Believing, as he did, in the Messiah, in the King of Zion as described in Psalms ii. and cx. to whom the uttermost parts of the earth should obey, who should be a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, (Ps. ii. 7; cx. 4,) is it likely that the thought should never have entered his mind, that the eternal kingdom of his house had reference to *that* descendant? At his departure from life, *if not earlier*, David knew at least, that the Messiah whose victories he had celebrated in Psalms ii. and cx. should spring from his progeny. In his above quoted *last* prophecy, he sees a ruler over men in righteousness and in the fear of God from his house, during whose reign an unclouded sun shall shine on men and the earth yield a rich increase. (Cf. ad. Ps. lxvii. 7.) He says that God's everlasting covenant with him had determined as much;* that all ungodly powers would be compelled to yield to the conquering might of his house. These words may be regarded as exhibiting the clear fundamental type of David's Messianic hopes. Our collection of Psalms contains two Messianic psalms of David, (Psalms ii. cx.) one of Solomon, (Psalm lxxii.) to which must be added Psalm xlv.

A few observations on *matter* and *form* are needed for the correct understanding of the Messianic psalms. If we understand the prophecies *as predictions of the life of Jesus* only, it will follow, that only some particulars met a literal fulfilment. Even the modern Jews, searching for Messianic predictions in that sense, deem themselves entitled to the confident assertion, that the Old Testament contains but few of that kind. We ask, Is the kingdom of Christ to be confined to the brief period of not quite three years of his ministry on earth? It is but the beginning of that consummation in the future kingdom of glory to which we have refer-

* To understand what is said of *the ruler* collectively of the whole house of David is equally admissible. It would even then exhibit a development of the prophecy in 2 Sam. vii., though David would then not have understood the full meaning of the promise.

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red, p. 46. Prophecy points to *every gradation of Christ's existence* and *the total extension of his kingdom*, down to its final completion. (1 Cor. xv. 28; xiii. 12; 2 Pet. iii.; Rev. xxi.) Supposing this to be seen and granted, we have further to consider, that prophecy refers to the Messiah and his kingdom in terms which have neither been fulfilled during the period of Christ's appearance on earth, nor in the history of the Christian Church, while they no less answer the expectations which we entertain of the future kingdom of God. The Messiah is certainly described as accomplishing his earthly mission in the character of a prophet and teacher endowed with the Spirit of God, of the servant of God, gentle and beneficent, despised by his nation and enduring great sufferings. (Isaiah xlii. 49. 53; Zech. ix. 11.) But a far greater number of passages set him forth as a valiant king, endowed with Divine power, who is to subdue the heathen and to establish the lasting temporal prosperity of his people. (Ps. ii. cx. lxxii.; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 6, as well as Ps. xlv. which is to be regarded as Messianic, use similar terms.) Here we ought to distinguish between the fundamental ideas of such prophecies and the *form* in which they are expressed. When reference is made to the condition of the saved, they are described as sitting down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, as entering paradise, as being received into everlasting habitations, as joining the Saviour in drinking anew of the fruit of the vine in his Father's kingdom, as being set some over few, others over many cities, *etc.* In the Apocalypse, the prophetic book of the New Testament, are depicted the heavenly Jerusalem as coming down upon the earth—the heavenly marriage at which the guests are to be furnished with fine linen, clean and white—the river of the water of life, and on its banks the tree of life, yielding its fruit every month, the leaves whereof are for the healing of the nations —the temple of God with the ark of the testaments, *etc.* (Chaps. xxi. xix. 7, 8; xi. 19.) Of the condemned on the other hand it is said in the Gospels and the Apocalypse, that they shall be cast into hell-fire, that their worm shall not die, that they shall be excluded from the marriage feast, that they shall be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. It has never been doubted that Christians are to grasp the fundamental ideas of such descriptions, and to regard the form of their expression as adaptations to our present power of comprehension. This is clear from the variety of forms and figures. In *some* passages of Revelations express explanations are given; *e. g.* chap. xix. 8, "The fine linen is the righteousness of saints." The same remarks apply to the predictions of the prophets concerning the kingdom of Christ. Their prophetic visions are related to their fulfilment as are the visions of Christ, the Apostles, and the Prophets of the New Testament, to the period of *the completion of the kingdom of Christ.* Just as we employ the most beautiful and significant conditions of

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the present as representations of the future, so did the prophets respecting the future kingdom of the Messiah. In the time of the Old Testament as well as among Christians, the weak and sensuous can only realize the substance in the symbol, while the more intelligent distinguish between symbol and thought. Hence the Messiah is represented invested with the three chief offices of the Jewish theocracy, as *King*, *Priest*, and *Prophet*. It is said in one place, that the nations shall show themselves willing to be instructed in Mount Zion, or that knowledge shall be sent to them, and that universal peace shall revisit the earth; in another, that the Philistines, Edom and Moab, shall be conquered, and the river of Egypt be dried up; in a third place, "Egypt shall do sacrifice and oblation. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a *blessing in the midst of the land;* whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." (Isaiah ii. xlii. 1—6; lx. 11; ix. 6, 7; xi. 14, 15; xix. 23—25.)

The conversion of the heathen is sometimes spoken of in terms which almost make one think that they were all to become Jews, (Isaiah xix. 21; lxvi. 20; Zech. xiv. 16,) while the same passages contain expressions which point to the abrogation of the ceremonial law. (Isaiah xix. 19; lxvi. 21; Zech. xiv. 20, 21.) In one place the wild beasts are represented as tame, in another, that God will destroy them: that the sun shall no more go down; and again, that God shall be their sun. (Isaiah xi. 6; lxv. 25; Ezek. xxxiv. 25; Isaiah lx. 20.) The variety of these figures shows that we can only retain the general thoughts which they embody. Just where everything seems to point to a narrow and Jewish horizon, some expression or other occurs which plainly indicates that all cannot be taken in a literal sense. Joel *e. g.* chap. iii. had spoken of the judgment of God upon the heathen, after which Jerusalem should become holy and no stranger pass through her any more, (Joel iii. 17;) he then says, "It shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters," —all temporal allusions—but immediately after we have, "and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord and shall water the valley of Shittim." Here we are all of a sudden on spiritual territory, for Shittim is a place on the plains of the Moabites, where the Israelites encamped when they contemplated their invasion of Canaan, so that the meaning is, "The spiritual water of life shall spread from the centre of the land to its frontiers." Similar is the passage in Ezek. xlvii. *etc.* "Waters issued out from under the threshold of the house, which being brought forth into

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the sea, the waters shall be healed, on the banks whereof trees shall grow, that shall bring forth new fruits every month, *because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary.*" Here is another instance. After the prophecy of the new covenant, by which the law should be written on the hearts of men, we have in Jer. xxxi. 38, *etc.* the following passage, which seems to proclaim the mere outward enlargement of the city of Jerusalem: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse-gate towards the east, shall be holy unto the Lord." The sublime meaning of this prophetic utterance is the sanctification of everything unclean and unholy at Jerusalem. The hill of Gareb was the abode of lepers, and the valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, the unclean valley of Hinnom, where the corpses of malefactors used to be burnt. The prophet's meaning is, "Every unclean spot shall then be included into the sanctuary."*

But to return to the *Messianic Psalms*. The preceding remarks are equally applicable to them. They depict the Messiah as a king appointed of God; as swaying the sceptre of righteousness, under whose reign God will lavish all his blessings on the people; as causing rebels to feel the edge of his sword, but as blessing the obedient. But what of the fulfilment of these predictions? In part it has already taken place, though it will be more completely realized in Christ's blissful dominion over his Church, and his judgments by which he will eventually triumph over all opposing powers (Cf. ad. Ps. ii.) Psalm xlv. is peculiar in its kind, since it allegorically represents the admission of Israel and the heathen into Messiah's kingdom by the figure of a marriage.†

* *Vide* for more proof, Hengstenberg's Christol. vol iii.

† Cf. the interpretation of that psalm. It has been repeatedly shown that both love and marriage songs are found among the Hindoos, the Arabians, and Persians, which, though without any allusions to a spiritual meaning, celebrate the soul's relation to God. This has been done for the purpose of supporting the view which attributes to the Song of Solomon a mystical allusion to the relation of God to Israel. We have recently received some interesting contributions in this respect by Lane, who cites (vol. ii. p. 194,) the following lines extracted from a song used by Mohammedan monks at their religious solemnities: "The image of thy form visited me in my sleep. I said, Oh, vision, who has sent thee? He said, I am sent by him whom thou knowest, whose love captivated thee. The loved of my heart visited me in the obscurity of night. I rose, to honour him, till he sat down. I said, Oh, thou my desire, and all my delight, art thou come at noon of night, and wert not afraid of the watchmen? He said, I feared them, but love has taken my soul and my breath." Lane compares

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In conjunction with these *royal* psalms we have another kind of Messianic psalms, which we may designate as psalms of the *kingdom*. As some portions of the prophets celebrate the Messianic kingdom, without making mention of its head, the Messiah, so also several psalms, *vide* Psalms xlvii. lxvii. lxviii. lxxvi. xcvi. xcvii. xcviii. Some of them indicate that great victories of Israel over neighbouring nations, in consequence of which even the heathen had to acknowledge the majesty of the God of Israel, and probably to send gifts to Jerusalem, gave rise to the hope, that all nations would gloriously join Israel, and all the princes and nations of the earth hereafter worship the God of Abraham. *Vide* esp. Psalm xlvii.

The Psalms contain yet another class of predictions, viz. the *typical* or *prefigurative*, as *e. g.* Psalms xvi. xxii. xl. lxix. As some of their expressions are said in the New Testament to have met their fulfilment in Christ, there have been from the earliest times many commentators who thought that the Psalmist had, while composing them, a lively representation of the Messiah, and as it were, composed them in His soul.* This is a very strange notion, for it is nowhere hinted that the Psalmist did ever compose a psalm in the mind of another, and not in his own. Add to this that the character of these psalms in no way differs from those which David and others composed under personal affliction. Hence some of the psalms of complaint, passages from which are in the New Testament applied to Christ, have not without caprice been designated as Messianic, and others because they do not occur in the New Testament as Davidic. Why should Psalm lxix. be referred to the Messiah, and why not Psalm xxviii. xxxv. lxiv. lxxxvi. *etc.*? Indeed, one of the psalms, the expressions of which were appropriated by the Redeemer himself, (viz. Psalm xxxi. 6,) has *not* been included in the list of Messianic Psalms.† Many minds have been led astray by the notion, that all the passages of the Old Testament which our Lord and his apostles have described as fulfilled in the New Testament history apply to it exclusively. The very opposite, however, appears from citations such as Matt. ii. 15. 18; xiii. 14; John vi. 45; 1 Cor. ix. 10, *etc.*‡ John v. 46,

it to Song of Solomon iii. 2—7. He remarks, however, that six of these verses find place in a common worldly love song which occurs in an edition of the "Thousand and one Nights," Calcutta, vol. i. p. 425, showing that such songs occasionally are void of every mark from which their spiritual sense could be inferred.

* Among the moderns, Seiler, (Prophecy and its fulfilment, 1794, p. 188,) Muentinghe, Hensler, Dereser, Pareau, Kaiser, Hengstenberg, (Christol. vol. i. but differently in his Comm. on the Psalms.)

† Augustine, A. H. Francke, Brenz, Calov, H. Michaelis, *etc.*, however, regard also this Psalm as Messianic.

‡ Cf. my work, "The Old Testament in the New Testament." Second Edition, 1889.

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our Lord appeals to the fact, that Moses prophesied concerning him. Only the five following passages in the Pentateuch have from the earliest times been regarded as predictions of Christ, Gen. iii. 15. [iv. 1.] xii. 8; xlix. 10; Numb. xxiv. 17; Deut. xviii. 18. Did Christ refer to these only? Certainly not. His manner of showing (John iii. 14) that the idea of his atonement was already expressed in the Old Testament, indicates that he no doubt desired us to regard the entire sacrificial institutions as well as other phenomena of the Old Testament, *e. g.* the history of men like David, as typical and pre-indicative of what should be completely fulfilled by him. It is said (Matt. v. 18) that every tittle of the law must be fulfilled; would not this imply a fulfilment in the sense just indicated? We maintain that Christ and his apostles quoted the Psalms as predictions of New Testament events in the last sense. Every pious man under the ancient economy, who suffered for God's cause, but triumphed at last, was a type of what should be completely fulfilled in Christ: hence it is said (1 Peter i. 11) that the Spirit of Christ in the prophets foretold them the sufferings of Christ. The Spirit of Christ so stirred the minds of the prophets that they could anticipatively speak of him. Some of the typical psalms, as will appear in the Commentary, are really of such a character that without assuming the Psalmists to have soared beyond their usual religious consciousness, they defy every attempt at explanation. *E. g.* Psalm xxii. in which after the hardest struggles and most lacerating complaints, the Psalmist is filled with so irresistible a sense of confident victory, that he ventures to describe the conversion of the whole world as the consequence of his struggles and victories. In Psalm xvi. he expresses himself in such confident and clear terms respecting his future hope, which can only be expected in a disciple of the New Testament. A large portion of commentators have from the earliest times held, that the fulfilment of a psalm in Christ does by no means imply its exclusive application to Christ, but is based upon the typical character of the Old Testament. Bishop Theodoret observes in the fifth century, ad. Ps. lix., that it strictly refers to the affliction of the exiled Jews, but typically to the Redeemer and the affliction which his rejection would bring upon the nation: the venerable Bede, the oracle of the eighth century, refers it as properly applicable to the times of the Maccabees. Theodoret explains Psalm xl. which (Heb. x. 5—9) is applied to Christ, primarily of David, secondarily of Christ. Ambrose, Augustine, and Athanasius have, on the other hand, explained these two psalms as if they spoke in the name of Christ and his Church only. This double manner of interpretation occurs also among the commentators of the later Roman Catholic Church. One of their most eminent men, the learned Benedictine Calmet, at the beginning of the

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eighteen century, maintains* (ad. Ps. xl. and lxix.) that David appears as the type of Christ, and that several passages in Ps. xxii. and most in Ps. xvi. treat of David.

The typical interpretation of the Psalms in which the singer speaks in the first person, became general in the Reformed Church. Even Calvin, Bucerus, Beza, Musculus, Rivet, adopt it clearly and confidently. According to Luther's view, however, David speaks in those passages in the person of Christ, so that we have really the words of Christ: this view has generally been adopted by Lutheran divines, *e. g.* Bugenhagen, Brenz, Calov, A. H. Francke, Geier, *etc.* Melanchthon already deviates from it and says, (ad. Ps. xxii. xli.) that David recounts *his own sufferings and deliverances*, though with the consciousness of their being types of the sufferings and deliverances of the Messiah. Other psalms which Luther applied to Christ and his kingdom, meet with a different explanation at the hands of Melanchthon. Luther explained Psalm xx. of David, and Psalm xxi. though connected with it, of the Messiah. The majority of Lutheran interpreters followed him in this respect; not so Melanchthon, who says that Psalm xxi. as well as Psalm xx. treat of one and the same King. The desire of collecting if possible many predictions of Christ, has so far biased some interpreters of the Psalms, that they dispute the validity of the titles. In spite of the title of Psalm iii. which states that it was composed when David fled from Absalom his son, Augustine explains it of Christ and his enemies: so also Cocceius, A. H. Francke, *etc.* Now, does it not imply distrust in the mighty and sure evidences of Christian truth, if in defiance of undeniable facts, we obstinately insist upon some less important piece of evidence? Besides, we should bear in mind, that we are not to consider the Psalter, though containing several prophetic songs, as a prophetical book, but that as far as it concerns the predictions respecting Christ and his kingdom, we are chiefly referred to the writings of the prophets.

* Commentarius literalis in Omnes libros Vet. et Novi Test. vol. iv.

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COMMENTARY.

PSALM I.

A DIDACTIC psalm, for its contents' sake (which resemble Psalm cxii.) designedly placed at the beginning of the book. It expresses in noble yet simple language the gospel truth, that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.) Popular wisdom, viz. the daily experience of life compressed into proverbs, is in perfect agreement with that proposition; *e. g.* "Honesty is the best policy." "Ill-gotten gains don't prosper," "Lightly come, lightly go," *etc.* Particular exceptions to such expressions will of course occur on earth, the land of faith, but an attentive observer cannot help noticing their truth in the aggregate.

The confirmation of the doctrine of this psalm which Divine justice has provided in the history of the Jewish nation, appeals strongly to the conscience of believers. It promises blessings and salvation to the kings of Israel who fear the Lord, visitation and multiform punishment to those who forsake him: Israel a flourishing kingdom among the kingdoms of the earth, with a king and the sanctuary, before the advent of the Messiah—without kings and priests, a proverb and a byeword among men, (Deut. xxviii. 37,) after their rejection of him. It has been shown in the Introduction how the saints of the Old Testament used to reconcile particular exceptions to this rule with their faith in the mundane government of a righteous God, such as the spectacle of crushed innocence contrasted with the assurance of the wicked, or that of the want of the godly contrasted with the abundance of the ungodly. We who live under the Gospel dispensation, and understand clearly what they did but darkly apprehend, seek the ultimate solution of all mysteries in the *final judgment*, which is to complete all the judgments of earth; and as we *now* admire the long-suffering and goodness of God by which he intends to lead the rebellious to *repentance*, (Rom. ii. 4,) so shall we then tremble at the *justice*

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with which he will judge the obdurate. Many passages of the Old Testament, especially of the Psalms, point, though with less clearness, to that *final* solution of all mysteries. So does this psalm, as do also Psalms xxxvii. xlix. and lxxiii.

The Psalmist contrasts the godly with the ungodly as two different generations, describes the difference of their destiny on earth, (v. 1—4,) and from it infers with still more assurance their ultimate destinies at the final judgment which is to complete God's temporal judgments, (v. 5.) The last verse comprehensively repeats the doctrine in both respects.

1 BLESSED is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
2 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD;
And in his law doth he meditate day and night.
3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
That bringeth forth his fruit in his season;
His leaf also shall not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
4 The ungodly *are* not so:
But *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

V. 1, 2. The generation of the righteous refuse to be determined and controlled in their resolutions by the ungodly; they have in their actions no communion with sinners, and shun the society of those who keep not holy the name of God. The law of God is not only the sole rule of conduct, but the delight of the pious. The saints of the Old Testament, though without the "grace and truth," and confined to "the law and the shadow of things to come," for "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," (John i. 17; Col. ii. 17,) had so great a delight in the law of the Lord, that they did meditate on it day and night, and were able to say with the Psalmist, "Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." (Psalm cxix. 97.) True, the law had expressly enjoined it upon them; and the Psalmist had no doubt clearly before his mind the words in Josh. i. 8: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous,

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and then thou shalt have good success." But the language of the Psalms clearly shows that delight and love prompted many an Old Testament saint to comply with the demands of the law.

V. 3. Trees planted by the water side are in a thriving condition, from the humidity which impregnates their pith, so that their leaves continue green—in the case of some, *e. g.* the olive tree, all the year round (Psalm lii. 10)—and they yield their fruit in their season. So the soul of man gets watered and fecundated from communion with God and delight in his law, so that he appears healthy while others decay, and finds strength adequate to the calls of duty. "I know both how to be abased," says the apostle, "and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. *I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.*" (Phil. iv. 12.) The assertion of the Psalmist, that "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper," is apparently liable to many exceptions, but when thoroughly fathomed will hold good in its strictest sense. He refers not to every act of the godly, but only to such "*that are wrought in God*," (John iii. 21)—he speaks of the *pious* deeds of the pious. The old Adam and the new are waging war while flesh and blood attach to man; hence many acts are done which cannot succeed; but is it possible that acts which flow from the new Adam should prove otherwise than successful? In performing them, man is simply the instrument of God; how then can at any time ill-success attend to that which the eternal God accomplishes by his instruments? The prophet Jeremiah propounds the same sentiment, (chap. xvii. 7, 8:) "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

V. 4. As the pious who derives the strength and fecundation of his soul from the word of God is like a firmly rooted tree, so he who lives without God in the world is like drifted chaff. He who has nothing sure in heaven, cannot have anything firm on earth. His views and resolutions change with the weather, as James says, "a double-minded man (doubter) is unstable in all his ways." (James i. 8.) Just as the wind carries away the light chaff from the loftily situated threshing-floors of the East, when the corn is winnowed, so are they scattered. (Job xxi. 18; Ps. xxxv. 5; Hos. xiii. 4.) Can a man confidently pursue the path of life if his views and principles are devoid of firmness? If the most confirmed miscreants and usurpers, (and such ripened evil-doers are the exceptions,) who seemed with unwavering step to pursue their end for the greater portion of their life, have been known to reel at certain decisive moments, as though the soil were receding from

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under their feet, how much more does this apply to beginners in evil! Universal experience thus shows the inconstancy of the prosperity of the wicked, and that is the judgment which they prepare for themselves on earth.

V. 5. The temporal judgments of God will be completed in eternity. When the Lord shall have sent forth his angels, and gathered the entire assembly of the righteous on earth, then shall the ungodly, though already frequently scattered here below, be as chaff before the blast of the final judgment, and find no place in the congregation of the righteous. (Isaiah iv. 4; xi. 9; lx. 21; Mal. iv.)

V. 6. It often appears as if God were unmindful of the path of thorns which his children have to tread here in "*time*," and they often think every way of escape cut off; but "The *Lord knoweth* the way of the righteous." His eye fixedly rests on it, and beholds the blessed issue where they can only see the boundary of thorns. The way of the ungodly, though broad and secure in the sight of men, suddenly breaks off and ends with terror. "The Lord shall laugh at the wicked, for he seeth that his day is coming." (Psalm xxxvii. 13.)

PSALM II.

A HORTATORY psalm against the princes who oppose Messiah, the anointed King of God.

The author is not mentioned in the title, but Acts iv. 25 refers its authorship to David. Even if the Messianic character of this psalm were denied, and it were explained of a rebellion of some tributary nations against a king of Israel, it would still have to be assigned to the times of David or Solomon, since in the later periods of Judah there lived no king sufficiently powerful that this psalm could apply to him. But it cannot be referred to the events in the history of David or Solomon: it cannot apply to the times of David, for, to mention but one thing, it clearly treats of the rebellion against a *newly instituted king*, and David on ascending the throne had not subdued all the tribes of Israel, much less foreign nations; it cannot refer to Solomon's accession, for that as well as the whole of his reign was strictly peaceful,* on which

* 1 Kings v. 3, 4. The insurrections mentioned 1 Kings xi. 14. 23, were trifling in themselves, and belong to the *last* period of the king's reign. The psalm could not have been composed then, because Solomon was at that time too much immersed in idolatry to compose such a psalm. To those who refer it to the *accession* of Solomon, (Ewald, Bleek,) it may be

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account Solomon was called *par excellence* "*the prince of peace.*" David rather composed it in the spirit, when he contemplated the future useless resistance of the nations of the earth against his royal Son. It was shown in the Introduction how David, meditating on the prophecy made to him, (2 Sam. vii.,) was led to the thought that the Messiah should spring from his own house. In the song from the last period of his life, (quoted pp. 48, 49,) we have a clear evidence of his Messianic hopes: the contents of that song may be compared with this psalm. The object of David's hopes in the song is the coming of a righteous and holy King from his own house, during whose reign universal prosperity should spring up like an unclouded sunrise, (Cf. ad. Psalm lxvii. 7,) while the ungodly should perish. In this psalm he beholds the eternal Sovereign of his house entering upon his reign, the princes of the earth rebelling against him, the Lord, while assuring him of victory, exhorting them to obey him. As David calls himself divinely inspired in 2 Samuel xxiii., and Christ says (Matt. xxii. 43) that David spoke Psalm cx. in the *spirit*, we may assume inspiration in this psalm. Its manner of expression indicates as much. Majesty and life characterize this beautiful psalm: the kings, God, and lastly the Messiah, appear in dramatic succession. Tranquillity ensues at last. Most Jewish interpreters consider the king here referred to, to be the Messiah. Messiah means "the anointed one," (John i. 41,) and this very king is described in verse 6 as the Anointed of God.*

Respecting the manner in which the Redeemer is mentioned, we refer to Introduction, page 50. Offence has been taken at the punishment with which the opponents of Messiah are threatened; but the same occurs in our Lord's own words in the New Testament. While the Saviour uses similar terms in representing the citizens of his kingdom as rebellious, and "killing the heir," (Luke xix. 14; Matt. xxi. 38,) he likewise declares that the wicked shall be slain, and those "who would not that he should reign over them" be destroyed. (Matt. xxi. 41; Luke xix. 27.) "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken," says he, "but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder." Such is the harmony of the words of prophecy and those of the New Testament.†

The prophetic Psalmist is translated to the time of the appearance of the Son of God as king of the earth, and hears the rebellious

replied that there is no allusion whatever to a rebellion on the part of subdued nations: again it is a question whether if v. 6 be rendered "*Upon Zion*," it may be said of Solomon, that he was anointed upon Zion. (Cf. 1 Kings i. 38.)

* The Hebrew has not the word from which the name "Messiah" is derived, but one cognate to it and in poetic use.

† Cf. to this Psalm and the prophetic psalms in general, (Sack's Apologetik, 2d edition, 1841, p. 278,) *etc.*

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speech of the princes, (v. 1—3.) For a while God seems to sleep, but then awakes like a hero, making the indisputable declaration, that no mortal can despise the king whom he has instituted, (v. 4—6.) Then appears the Messiah, to testify to the dominion over all flesh which the Father has conferred upon him, (v. 7—9.) The royal prophet, finally, exhorts the kings of the earth to timely obedience, ere punishment befall them, (10. 12.)

1 WHY do the heathen rage,
And the people imagine a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*,
3 "Let us break their bands asunder,
And cast away their cords from us."
4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:
The LORD shall have them in derision.
5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,
And vex them in his sore displeasure:
6 "Yet have I anointed my king
Upon my holy hill of Zion."*
7 I will declare the decree (of the Lord):
The LORD hath said unto me, "Thou *art* my Son;
This day have I begotten thee.
8 Ask of me,
And I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.
9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings:
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,
And ye perish *from* the way,
For his wrath is soon kindled.
Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

V. 1—3. The spirit of prophecy reveals to David, that the world will not willingly submit to the government of the Prince of Peace. His spirit hears the wild rage and tumult which usher in rebellion, but discerns also its ill-success. He beholds their gathering—for darkness has its potentates—and however much rent

* Or, "*Over* my holy hill of Zion."

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and divided they may be, in one thing they are *of* one mind. "We will not have this one to reign over us." (Luke xix. 14.) "My yoke is easy and my burden is light," said the Saviour when he was on earth, and yet but few were willing to bow beneath those light bands and blessed cords—John had to complain in those days that "He came to his own and his own received him not." They who refuse to wear those light bands are injuring themselves most by bringing down upon them the righteous judgment of Him, who will not suffer his honour to be trampled under foot with impunity. The New Testament as well as this psalm state, that rejecting the Messiah is the same as rejecting the Lord of heaven and earth, since here the bands and cords of the Anointed of God are described as God's own. The Prophets refer in language still more decisive to the unbelief and rebellion of men against the Messiah. "He was so despised that they hid their faces from him and we esteemed him not." (Isa. liii. 3.) The prophet Zechariah personifies Messiah, the Shepherd whom the people reward with the contemptible sum of thirty pieces of silver. (Zech. xi. 12.) Daniel says, "And after three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself." (Dan. ix. 26.)

V. 4—6. There are tumults and commotions on earth; the children of God get afraid, and ask, "O Lord, how long?" But 'tis calm and bright in the heavens. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." He would do so, were he man. "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. That bringeth the princes to nothing;—he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." (Isa. xl. 22, 23.) Our heart must be where God is. If we leave it on the raging and stormy earth, it joins in the raging and the storm; if we lift it to the peace and happiness of God's Heaven, his peace and happiness flow to us. The Lord has his time to laugh and to continue silent, but "Thinkest thou that I shall always be silent and thou fearest me not?" he asks (Isa. lvii. 11.) No; he will speak, and so speak that "*whosoever* heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle." But for a little while will he suffer his anointed One to be despised, as if he did not heed it. Within that brief period falls our existence. His voice will then be heard in all the earth, and his mighty acts will ask, "Shall men be able to depose whom *I* have created and instituted as king?" God has instituted him as *king:* shall this king lack *subjects?* No, as the apostle has it, "At the name of Jesus *every* knee shall bow, and *every* tongue shall confess that he is the Lord." (Phil. ii. 9.) If not willingly, they will be compelled to do it unwillingly: should they deny his *righteousness* and *love*, they will not be able to deny his *majesty* and *glory*. This

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king is set upon or over Zion, viz. the heavenly Jerusalem of which Paul speaks. (Gal. vi. 16; iv. 26.)

V. 7—9. The prophet now hears the king's own speech. He speaks of his divine generation and appointment, which being from everlasting can never be destroyed. His royal majesty, however, was not revealed till after the time of his obedience on earth, and he was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. i. 4.) Paul connects this passage with the time of Christ's resurrection, because not till then did his Sonship become manifest to them. (Acts xiii. 33.) Israel and its kings are sometimes called "sons of God." (Ex. iv. 22; 2 Sam. vii. 14; Psalm lxxxix. 27.) But they bear the name of children and sons of God in a very important sense, simply on account of having experienced the love of God. The Messiah, on the other hand, is the Son of God indeed, above whom the heavens were opened, and the voice of God said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He testifies in this place that the ends of the earth are his possession. No king in Israel ever received promise like this. The limits of Israel were "from the Red Sea even unto the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river." (Ex. xxiii. 31; Ps. lxxx. 12.) More remote frontiers are set to King Messiah: "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river (Euphrates) to the ends of the earth." (Ps. lxxii. 8; Zech. ix. 10.) He who had not where to lay his head on earth, said nevertheless, "Thou hast given to thy Son power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him;" and again, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." Our Lord did not take the world with the sceptre of the mighty on earth, but with the mild sceptre of peace. But as the shepherd uses his staff only among the sheep that hear his voice, but wears a sword against wolves, so the good Shepherd wears a sword along with his staff, and says, concerning the evil servant, "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. xxiv. 50, 51.) The Saviour is called "a *Lamb;*" but there is also mentioned the *wrath* of the Lamb; as it is written that they shall say to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. vi. 16, 17.) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.)

V. 10—12. With such thoughts of the wrath to come the royal prophet exhorts the kings of the earth to be instructed

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betimes. They are to rejoice in the possession of such a ruler, but to remember that the sceptre of his protection may be turned into the rod of punishment. He bids them to *kiss* the Son, which is a mark of homage and adoration, (1 Sam. x. 1,) and to confide in and take refuge with him, which involves an amount of power beneath the shelter of which they may securely brave any tempest. Conscious that the possession of him includes that of everything else, the Psalmist calmly closes this impassioned song with the words: "*Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*"

PSALM III.

A PRAYER of David, falling into that period of sore temptation, when Absalom, his beloved son, sought to deprive him of his crown and life. At the end of the ten years of Saul's bitter persecution, David may have considered the time of his exile for ever gone. But it was to return once more towards the latter end of his life, caused by his own son, and Ahithophel, a treacherous friend. A messenger came to David informing him that the people were running after Absalom saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom." But David said to all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise and let us flee, for we shall not else escape from Absalom!" Thus, accompanied by a few of his faithful followers and the tears of a great portion of the people, with covered head and barefooted, he went over Mount Olivet towards the river Jordan to wait in the desert for the issue of things at Jerusalem. (2 Sam. xvii. 21—24.) The event is touchingly described in 2 Sam. xv. During his absence from the city, David appears to have experienced the continuous alternation of various degrees of calm repose and great anxiety and fear. (Cf. Ps. lv. xxviii.) Most of the psalms which he composed during that flight in the desert, or still later, betray great anxiety. This psalm, expressive of filial confidence in the midst of trouble, accords best with that melancholic disposition of peace, which may be traced in the words of the humbled king on the first day after his departure from the city. Compare also his conciliating language to Shimei. (2 Sam. xvi.) Since the contents of the psalm show that it was sung in the evening, (v. 6,) we may infer that it was composed on the evening of that first day when the king took night-quarters at Bahurim, close by Jerusalem. (2 Sam. xvi. 5—14.)

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1 A PSALM of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.
2 LORD, how are they increased that trouble me?
Many *are* they that rise up against me.
3 Many *there be* which say of my soul,
There is no help for him in God. Selah.
4 But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me;
My glory, and the lifter up of mine head.
5 I cried unto the LORD with my voice,
And he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.
6 I lay me down and sleep;
I awake;* for the LORD sustaineth me.
7 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,
That have set *themselves* against me round about.
8 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God:
For thou smitest all mine enemies *upon* the cheek-bone;
Thou breakest the teeth of the ungodly.
9 Salvation is with the LORD:
Thy blessing *is* upon thy people. Selah.

V. 1. What a share of sad experience for the humbled king was compressed into that one day. His throne is lost, the sanctuary left behind; his beloved son has become his persecutor, and a highly esteemed and trusty friend (Psalm lv. 14, 15,) turned a traitor; faithless subjects have derided him, and even thrown stones at him! (2 Sam. xvi. 6, 7.) Tired and worn out with the fatigues of the day, he has reached his night quarters, (2 Sam. xvi. 14,) and withal can retire in profound calm of mind, as it is here portrayed!

His excitement is yet alive at the beginning of the psalm. The first impression of the insurrection is evident (v. 2, 3.) The thought of the Lord however inspires confidence (v. 4, 5.) He then lies down, sure of the blessing of God upon himself and the faithful people of God (v. 6—9.)

V. 2, 3. He might well complain of the multitude of his opponents. Hardly more than six hundred men had remained with him, (2 Sam. xv. 18,) since the people without Jerusalem had in masses joined rebellious Absalom. (2 Sam. xv. 13.) They said, in their overweening confidence, of him who, in innumerable instances, had experienced the most wonderful deliverances of

* We may translate with A. V. in the past time, and render, "I laid me down and slept," "I awaked." The psalm would then have been sung in the morning; but the subsiding in gradual calm towards the end, adapts it more for an evening song.

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God, "There is no help for him in God." Shimei in particular had indulged in blasphemy like this: "The Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son; and behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man." (2 Sam. xvi. 8.)

V. 4, 5. He had still a small number of faithful adherents. Valiant Joab and Abishai surrounded him. But he confides not in the spear and shield of man. The *Lord* is his shield: he hopes to be reinstated to honour by *him*, and trusts that *he* will lift up his bowed head again. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." (Jer. xvii. 5.) The priests wished to carry away the ark of the covenant: David sent it back, and said, with mild resignation, "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation; but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." (2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.) He then directs his thoughts to the holy hill, and knows that, though remote from it, he is not remote from Him who hears from there. *Selah* follows this expression, which always occurs after emphatic thoughts, when song used to be followed by a musical interlude.

V. 6, 7. Peaceful and quieted he is about to lay him down in the midst of a rebellious people: he feels as if the Lord were standing by his side, and holding him with his right hand. Who among Christians does imitate him in similar circumstances?

V. 8, 9. The recollection of great deliverances now rushed upon his mind. His song at the close of his life was, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." (Psalm xviii. 3.) Every experience which formed the basis of these expressions burst upon his soul. His enemies had frequently compassed him as wild beasts, but he had escaped from their mouth. (Psalm xxii. 17. 22.) The remembrance of such experiences kindled the hope that the Lord would help him, and break the teeth of the wild animals which were turned against him. He looks not around him on earth: his confidence and hope centre in God alone. "Salvation is with the Lord," as if he had said, What other help do I require? We may understand the people for whom he prays to designate the mass of the rebellious, which might then be paraphrased, Let not my blinded subjects suffer for the folly and wickedness of some few! The term "people of God," however, means frequently in the Psalms, the generation of the godly, the real Israel after the Spirit, (Psalms xiv. 4; lxxii. 2,) and as such it may here have designated the faithful portion of the people, who from faith in God had continued faithful to their rightful monarch. (Psalm lxxxix. 9; see also ad. lxiii. 12.)

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PSALM IV.

A PSALM of comfort of David, which probably belongs to the period when David, returning with his men to the town of Ziklag, which the king of the Philistines had given him, found that the Amalekites had invaded and burnt it, and carried off the women and children.

The six hundred who had followed David became then so filled with distrust and exasperation against David, that they actually talked of stoning him. (1 Sam. xxx. 6.) That event would satisfactorily explain v. 6, and especially vs. 6—8. The psalm was composed in the evening, (see v. 9.) David looks to God for strength and consolation, (v. 1.) He remembers his worldly-minded associates, and chides them for their hasty abandonment of confidence in his good cause, (vs. 2—6.) He supplicates God for the return of prosperity, (v. 7,) though he already derives more enjoyment and blessings from his communion with the Lord, than they do from their temporal possessions, (v. 8.) Strengthened by these thoughts, he retires peacefully to rest under the shield and protection of God.

1 TO the chief Musician, on the Harp, a Psalm of David.
2 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness;
Thou hast enlarged me *when I was* in distress;
Have mercy upon me and hear my prayer.
3 O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn* my glory into shame?
How long will ye love vanity, *and* seek after leasing? Selah.
4 But know that the LORD hath chosen His holy one;
The LORD will hear when I call unto him.
5 Stand in awe, and sin not:
Commune with your own heart
Upon your bed, and be still. Selah.
6 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,*
And put your trust in the LORD.
7 *There be* many that say, "Who will show us *any* good?"
LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.
8 Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
More than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased.
9 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep:
For thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

* Or, "right sacrifices."

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V. 2. Taking his refuge in prayer, he practically expresses his conviction, that however much the unbelieving may feel inclined to ascribe to blind and unconscious fate events like that just realized, (viz. the unexpected invasion of the Amalekites,) that all visitations, however unexpected or distressing they be, are lodged in the hands of God, and by him dispensed to men. By calling him the God of his righteousness, he testifies that he, to whose will every human destiny is to be referred, does not conduct the government of the world in an arbitrary manner, but after a standard of eternal truth and equity, and views his own case in that light:—"Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress," shows that he is not a novice in his communion with God, but that in similar situations he has frequently communed with him, and experienced that the prayers of the tried and distressed are not uttered in vain, but that there is an ear in heaven which is sure to hear them.

V. 3, 4. He then contemplates the case of his associates, who had joined him in the confidence that God would not leave him, his pious servant. David's example may teach us how to defend our honour, though we should with David regard it as the gift of God. It is hardly probable that he alludes to the *royal* glory, derived from Samuel's having anointed him, as he could not assert *that* during the lifetime of Saul, without appearing rebellious. Moreover, he caused himself with the consent of the people once more to be anointed after the death of Saul. (2 Sam. ii. 4.) But he may refer to that glory of peculiar Divine protection, which is enjoyed by the faithful servants of God, (v. 4.) We find, however, that the opinion obtained pretty generally, that the son of Jesse was to inherit the kingdom. (1 Sam. xxv. 28.)

Very probably many of those who were trying their chance with David shared in that opinion, though there is nothing that should have prevented him from remembering his prerogative in secret prayer to God. But however that may be, he first remonstrates with his followers, that not only his enemies, but they, his professed friends, should yield themselves to the deterioration of his glory, and leasingly doubt the continuance of God's protection because of a transient bitter experience. He calls them, *par excellence*, "sons of men," *i. e. heroes*, or as Luther renders, "Lords." He appeals to his conviction that God, who had once for all separated him for his service, would not prove faithless in his promise, and that his prayers to God on that ground possess intrinsic worth. Here we have the identical grounds for that confidence which the children of God display in their prayers; *i. e.* He who has once chosen them in his Son can never prove faithless to his promises. That faith renders our prayers to God efficacious.

V. 5, 6. Conscious of the complete amalgamation of his cause with that of God, he is able to exhort those who seemed to despair of his cause, to stand in awe at such wickedness. In the stillness

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of night, he calls upon his passionate followers to come to themselves during the quietude of nightly repose, when things appear so different from what they do in the bustle of the day. He chides them for having hitherto omitted to pay the sacrifices which are well pleasing to God, and expresses his conviction, that God will be sure to do his part and fulfil his promises, if they would but perform theirs. These words of David contain the exhortation of James the apostle, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." (James iv. 8.)

V. 7, 8. After this exhortation follows his prayer to God, to perform his work and to lift up the light of his countenance upon him to whom he had made such great promises. The high priest's benediction upon the people of God was, "The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." Every member of the true Israel was entitled to apply a share of that blessing to himself. Hence the frequent allusions to it in the Psalms. (Psalm xxxi. 17; lxvii. 2; lxxx. 20; lxxxix. 16.) A beaming countenance is expressive of love and joy: now if God regard man with such a face, how can good fail to come? David moreover declares that he for his part is not only hoping for the mercy of God for the future, nor merely desiring it in its external manifestations, but that his goodness has already prepared so abundant a flow of joy in his heart as greatly to excel that loudest of earthly joys in Palestine—the joy of harvest and vintage time, (Isaiah ix. 3; Jeremiah xlviii. 33,) when hill and dale reverberate with the festive sounds of joy. The same joying in God is sublimely expressed in Psalms xvi. xxiii. xxxvi. lxxiii. *etc.* How much the associates of David were attached to temporal riches may be seen 1 Sam. xxx. 22.

V. 9. In this communion with God, a calm so deep and a joy so intense have filled the Psalmist's mind, that in the enjoyment of profoundest peace he can lay him down, counting all human protection and human watchmen as nothing, and deems himself perfectly safe beneath the shelter of his Lord.

PSALM V.

A PSALM of complaint of David, probably belonging to the period of his residence at the court of Saul; for he could not use verse 8, when during his flight he was alternately driven to the Judæan wilderness, to the Philistines, or elsewhere. While he was at Saul's court, a hostile faction sought to fan his suspicions, to which he was naturally addicted, by saying that David was aiming at his life and coveting his throne. That faction chiefly com-

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prised members of the tribe of Saul (Benjaminites,) from whom the majority of courtiers were selected. To these belonged Cush, of whom David complains, (Psalm vii.) and Shimei, who showed his attachment to Saul and hostility towards David at the time of the conspiracy of Absalom. At the incitement of the Benjaminites there arose a conspiracy during the last years of the reign of David. (Cf. 1 Sam. xxii. 7; xxvi. 19; 2 Sam. xvi. 8; xix. 16; xx. 1. Cf. also Introduction to Psalm lxxviii.) The instance of Doeg (Cf. Introduction to Psalm lii.) shows how sanguinary and unscrupulous some of his enemies were.

We gather from verse 4, that this psalm was sung in the morning. After having tuned his mind into a prayerful mood (vs. 2, 3,) the Psalmist edifies himself with the thought, that the God to whom he is praying delights in the honest and sincere of heart, but despises the ungodly (vs. 4—8.) This forms the ground of his prayer, that God would *effectively* manifest his hatred against unrighteousness, to the end that his praise might for ever be on the lips of all his servants (vs. 9—13.)

1 TO the chief Musician, on the Flute, A Psalm of David.
2 Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider the warmth of my grief:*
3 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God:
For unto thee will I pray.
4 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD;
In the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.
5 For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness:
Neither shall evil dwell with thee.
6 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight:
Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.
7 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing:
The LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.
8 But as for me, I will come *into* thy house in the fulness of love to thee,
And in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.
9 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies;
Make thy way straight before my face.

* Cf. Psalm xxxix. 4, in the original.

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10 For *there* is no faithfulness in their mouth;
Their inward part *is* very wickedness;
Their throat is an open sepulchre;
They flatter with their tongue.
11 Make them guilty, O God;
Let them fall from their own counsels;
Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions;
For they have rebelled against *thee*.
12 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice;
Let them ever shout for joy, because thou protectest them;
Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.
13 For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous;
With favour wilt thou crown him as *with* a shield.

V. 2, 3. In his affliction David neither consumes his grief within himself nor complains before man, but gives vent to his oppressed heart by directing his complaints to Him who can send relief. While others devour their troubles in silent obstinacy, or give free course to them before men in talkative weakness, but grow dumb before God, true Christians get neither hardened in their sorrow nor soft and loquacious before man, but silently carry their sorrow to Him who knows best how to heal. David calls the Lord his King and his God. How significant! He is sure of being heard; for would a righteous king shut his ears against his subjects? or God, who has said to man, "I am *thy* God!" refuse protection, if supplicated?

V. 4. As we should begin all things with God, so David begins the day with him: before holding intercourse with man, he seeks for communion with God. Early in the morning he takes his cause to God, as his efficient advocate, and confidently looks up to him for the direction of his affairs.

V. 5—8. The insolence of the wicked is so far from making him afraid, that it only increases the confidence of his prayer. While the wicked grow more determinate and daring, there is nothing more certain than that He who according to his nature hates all wickedness, will sooner or later *effectively* manifest the promises of his word. The Psalmist speaks of his love and fear with which he will frequent the house of God, not to boast himself, but because the man of prayer feels the need of being subjectively conscious of his adoption into God's family, to endue his prayers with more trust. Did not our Lord, to express the grantability* of his prayer in a more distinct manner, say, "I pray not for the

* I have coined this word, to escape a circuitous mode of expression.—[TRANS.]

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world, but for them which thou hast given me"? Why then should not a pious man address God in language like this: "O Lord, thou wilt not leave me; for my inmost consciousness tells me that I am thine; my love to thee yields this evidence"? By "the temple," we must understand "the tabernacle:" (Cf. Psalm lxv. 5:) "temple" designates any large building: so in Psalm xxvii. 4, the temple is mentioned, in verse 6 the tabernacle; so in 1 Sam. i. 9; iii. 3, the tabernacle is called the temple. At the time when David composed this Psalm, the tabernacle was at Nob, which was so near to Jerusalem, that the city could be seen from there.* David could therefore easily repair there for public worship. His friendship with Ahimelech the priest, and the expressions of the latter (1 Sam. xxii. 15; cf. chap. xxi.) show David's faithfulness to the sanctuary.

V. 9. The term, "righteousness of God," as used in the Psalms, frequently includes the ideas of kindness and lenity, as does the German "Rechtschaffenheit." The Psalmist invokes the kindness of God to lead him in a straight path; the plain way being that in which men do not stumble, and are preserved from mishap. (Psalm xxvii. 11; Jer. xxxi. 9.) Possibly that righteousness may be meant here, which God *demands from man*. David's prayer would then be, not to deviate from the right path, lest he should not thrust himself into danger; according to Prov. xi. 5, "The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way; but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness." David prays for being kept in the right path "*because of his enemies;*" for as the cause of the godly is the cause of God, so the abuses of the wicked against them affect Him who calls himself their God and their King. Cf. Ps. xxii. 9.

V. 10. The description of the impiousness of his enemies strengthens his conviction that God will not linger with the administration of his justice. Their speech is treacherous and their throat an open sepulchre—by throat he means the calumnies which they uttered†—they flatter with their tongues and hide mischief in the secret recesses of their minds. We may readily conceive that they pretended to be mightily zealous for the prosperity of Saul, since he himself gave them to understand that he considered all those who did not desire the destruction of David as his personal enemies. (1 Sam. xxii. 8.)

V. 11. "*Make them guilty*" means, "May Divine justice cause them to *feel* their guilt by the failure of their enterprises, and make them perceive that they did not only oppose man but God." The Lord said (Deut. xxxii. 35,) "To me belongeth vengeance and

* Robinson's Palestine, vol. ii. p. 368.

† The *throat* as well as *the tongue* are organs of *speech*, as is clear from the Hebrew of Psalm cxlix. 6.

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recompense." *That* sentence caused David to refrain from taking vengeance into his own hands and to refer it to God, as he said to Saul, "The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee; but mine hand shall not be upon thee." (1 Sam. xxiv. 12.) He supplicated revenge at the hands of God, not for his personal gratification, but mainly because the cause of calumniated and oppressed innocence is always that of God, and because his glory gets sullied when wickedness triumphs. Haughty men have certainly not the remotest idea that God sets so great a value on poor mortals, that he should consider his eternal majesty injured, when they are injured. They no more think that their blows will strike heaven, than they do when they tread the dust or mud under foot. But the less they think so, the more fit does it seem to Divine wisdom now and then to furnish the most palpable evidence how precious are to him those "little ones," as Christ calls them: with this correspond the words of the prophet, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye." (Zech. ii. 8.)

V. 12. As another ground for the supplicated manifestation of God's punitive justice, the Psalmist adduces the eternal praise and gratitude of the entire company of the godly which should be paid to him. For God is not like an unfeeling idol, unheedful of the joyful praises and sacrifices of gratitude which man, his creature, pays to him, but he is like a father, who rejoices in the honour and love which his children bear to him. David, here and elsewhere, so completely regards all the pious as one component whole, where if "one member be honoured all the members rejoice with it," (1 Cor. xii. 26,) that he considers his own deliverance as their common interest; for are not benefits conferred on individuals pledges to the rest?

V. 13. The promise to the righteous is universal, and excludes none from its blessings. Nothing is said of reward or merit, but *grace* shall crown and compass them: the same grace shall be their most sure defence. As the huge shields of antiquity were a cover and safeguard for the whole body, so there is no assault of the enemy, and no danger, from which the grace of God is not a sufficient protection.

PSALM VI.

SOME commentators hold that this Psalm, and Psalms xxvi. xxvii. xxxi. xxxviii. xxxix. xli. lxix. lxxxviii. which resemble it, were composed in great bodily afflictions, while others regard the allusions to disease which occur here and in Isaiah i. 5, 6; liii. 3, as descriptive of physical sufferings resulting from the persecutions to which the Psalmist was exposed. Both views contain some truth.

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Disease must be considered as the primary cause for complaint in Psalm xli., to which are added the sufferings inflicted by the arrogance of malicious enemies, so Psalm lxix. 21, 22. In others, mental sufferings are excited by the enemy, which like every kind of acute and profound suffering is sure to affect the body. Thus David complains (Psalm lxix.) that the abuse of his enemies makes him ill, and that his illness gave them new occasion to hurt him. In Psalm xxxi. 10, 11, he says that his grief had diseased his physical frame; verse 9 shows that the primary source of suffering in this psalm is to be sought with the enemy. But while daily mortification attending a sense of innocence, grief at the wickedness of men, (Cf. Psalm cxix. 53, "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law,") and the fear of having to deal with an angry God, made a united onslaught upon the mind, is it likely that such manifold pain should leave the body unaffected? The composition of this psalm no doubt belongs to the period of Saul's persecutions, when every morning brought new dangers, and new terrors frightened the wanderer from every asylum, to those days of tears of which he has sung, (Psalm lvi. 9:) "Count the days of my flight: put thou my tears into thy bottle."

It is truly affecting to mark how David in this prayer, after the manner of genuine men of prayer, mounts from the abyss of despair to the triumphant consciousness that his petition is heard. He begins in mournful lays, declaring that affliction has reached a climax, and that his strength is wholly broken, (v. 2—4.) To some extent calmed, he vows songs of gratitude as they are pleasing to God, and gets absorbed in the contemplation of that grief which he has now borne for so long a time, (v. 5—8.) Then issues forth from the depths of his soul the divine "Amen," and he who just now lay in the abyss of despair, causes triumphal notes to ascend to heaven, (v. 9—11.) This beautiful evidence of genuine and deep-felt prayer, viz. the sudden assurance of being heard, bursting forth from grievous complaint, may be also seen in Psalms vii. 18; xxii. 25; xxviii. 6; lvi. 13, 14; lxxv. 10, 11.

1 TO the chief Musician, on the Harp, to the eighth tune,*
A Psalm of David.
2 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,
Neither chasten me in thine hot displeasure.
3 Have mercy upon me, O LORD: for I *am* weak:
O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

* The stringed instruments of the Hebrews were probably like those of the Greeks, drawn and tuned according to different keys and tunes. For ancient performers were not able to play different tunes on the same instrument, but obliged to use different instruments.

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4 My soul is also sore vexed:
But thou, O LORD, how long?
5 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul:
Oh, save me for thy mercies' sake!
6 For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee.
In the grave who shall give thee thanks?
7 I am weary with my groaning;
All the night make I my bed to swim;
I water my couch with my tears.
8 Mine eye is consumed because of grief;
It waxeth old, for I am troubled everywhere.
9 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity!
For the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.
10 The LORD hath heard my supplication;
The LORD will receive my prayer.
11 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed:
Let them return *and* be ashamed suddenly.

V. 2. Though man's malice scourges David, he looks forthwith up to the Hand in heaven, without whose permission no hand on earth dares stir. He inquires into the last reason of his visitation, and refuses not to acknowledge his tribulation as the well-deserved judgment of God. He prays not for the removal of the chastising rod, but only that God would not apply it in his anger, and vouchsafe to him the assurance of his reconciliation. (Cf. Ps. xxxviii. 1; Jer. x. 24.) As applicable to all psalms of complaint, we should bear in mind the following fact. Those holy men, feeling the hand of the Lord resting upon them, deemed the displeasure of God as the bitterest drop in their cup of sorrow. Thus David prays, (Ps. xxv. 17, 18,) "The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain, *and forgive all my sin.*" Thus the sons of Korah sing at a time of national calamity, "Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?" (Ps. lxxxv. 6; Cf. Notes to Ps. xxxviii. 2—6.) How far remote from such wholesome humiliation is the mass of mankind, who curse and swear at man, or even, should they ultimately trace back their misfortune to the Hand in heaven, *blaspheme* God instead of *accusing themselves.*

V. 3, 4. Deep and especially lasting agony of mind cannot but undermine the physical frame. Hence David laments that because his soul is sore vexed to its foundation, his bones, the foundations of the material body, are equally vexed and shaken. But as God often desires things to reach a climax like this, David represents the extremity of his sorrow as a motive that God would

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not delay his mercy any longer. We may infer from the expression, "O Lord, how long?" that he had already spent years of misery. Those who have been disciplined in the school of sorrow will confess that it is not so much the greatness of misery as its continuous duration which undermines body and soul. History shows us David, not as effeminately soft, but as a hero who braved many a fierce battle. Is it likely that he should break out into unbounded lamentation at transient and light afflictions?

V. 5, 6. If God be our God, we anticipate to receive at his hands peace and happiness. Hence the sufferer considers God as having entirely deserted him: he cries therefore, "Return, O Lord!" But he asserts no claim, not even in his great tribulations, but simply *prays* to God for deliverance, and that for his mercies' sake. He regards the praise of God as constituting the real business of his life; he praised him in the day of affliction, how great will his glory be after his deliverance. He is convinced that a life thus spent in childlike, happy gratitude, is a sweet savour to God, and asks therefore, "In the grave, who shall give thee thanks?"

V. 7, 8. Trouble disturbed his peace by day, grief by night. How intense must have been his affliction, who as a tender boy slew a Goliath with his sling, and as a man wept for nights together! Tears had deprived his eyes of vision—they had grown dim, as in old age. How vehement the flow of sorrow that could draw streams of tears. He says that he is troubled *everywhere*—for his persecutors gave him no rest; and history shows that even where he deemed himself secure among his friends, *e. g.* at Kagilah and Siph, fear and covetousness turned his friends into traitors.

V. 9—11. When God is not a mere thought without and above us, but dwells essentially in our hearts, we are sure of the blessing, that while we are perseveringly struggling in prayer to hear the Divine, "Amen." How marvellous a change! A minute ago he lay in the abyss of despair, now he has scaled the heavens. He knows that his prayer is heard, and the eye of faith, to which the invisible becomes visible, beholds all his enemies put to flight. He beholds them *suddenly* put to shame, for God renders it manifest to his children that it is *his* aid, by sending it *unawares*.

PSALM VII.

A PSALM of complaint of David, belonging to the period of his flight. Verse 5 refers to the magnanimity he exhibited in sparing his persecutor, whom God had delivered into his hands, and stopping the hand of vengeful Abishai. (1 Sam. xxvi. 9.) It was said

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in the introduction to Psalm v. that the members of the tribe of Saul the Benjaminite, were the chief accusers of the son of Jesse. They accused him who had said in the hour of temptation, "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed," (1 Sam. xxvi. 11,) of aiming at the crown and life of the king. In fact, David in his after-interview with Saul told him, that the accusations of hostile men had mainly brought about his proscription. (1 Sam. xxvi. 19.) Their hatred of David's piety, their envy at his former greatness, no less than the covetousness which made them court the favour and gifts of Saul, and lastly, their jealousy of tribe against the scion of the house of Judah, combined in stirring them to continuous hostilities against the innocent man.

David turning him from his persecutors to God Almighty, asserts the glory of a good conscience, (v. 2—6.) Dismayed at the injustice and malice suffered to exist in this world, the sceptre of which is swayed by a holy God, who has no pleasure in iniquity, he raises an affecting cry for help, invoking Divine righteousness to dispose of mundane affairs, (v. 7—10.) Soothing his soul, and calming his mind, he declares (however much human pusillanimity may differ from him) that the judgments of God are daily being repeated, and that his lingering with their execution arises mainly from his desire to wait for the repentance of men, (v. 11—14.) His eye then looks into the future, and he beholds with certainty, that the hardened offender who refuses to repent, will eventually become his own judge and executor, (v. 15—18.)

1 A COMPLAINT of David, which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush the Benjaminite.
2 O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust:
Save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:
3 Lest they tear my soul like a lion,
Rending *it* in pieces, while *there is* not a deliverer.
4 O LORD my God, if I have done this;
If there be iniquity in my hands;
5 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me;
(Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:)
6 Let the enemy persecute my soul and take *it;*
Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth,
And lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.
7 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger,
Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies:
And awake for me, thou, who hast ordained judgment.

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8 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about:
(Then) over them return thou on high.
9 The LORD shall judge the people:
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
And according to mine integrity *that* is in me.
10 Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end!
But establish the just:
For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.
11 My defence *is* of God,
Which saveth the upright in heart,
12 God is a righteous judge,
And God is angry *with the wicked* every day.
13 If he (Saul) turn not, He hath whetted his sword;
He hath bent his bow, and made it ready.
14 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death;
He hath made his arrows flaming.
15 Behold he (the persecutor) travaileth with iniquity,
And hath conceived mischief,
And brought forth falsehood.
16 He made a pit, and digged it,
And is fallen into the ditch *which* he made.
17 His mischief shall return upon his own head,
And his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.
18 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness,
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

V. 2. Stepping into the presence of God, in the language of complaint, David's heart appears to have lost its hold; but it is only appearance, for he at once declares himself to be one of those who spread their complaints before God in *faith* and *confidence*.

V. 3—6. He is so conscious of his innocence that he ventures to challenge Divine judgments, should the accusations of his enemies prove just. "If I have done this" (without particularly specifying the accusation, for it had spread through all the country, and the thousands of Saul's pursuing hosts were so many accusers charging him with conspiracy,) "If there be iniquity in my hands," says he, similar to his expressions in his interview with Saul, "wherefore doth my Lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or *what evil is in mine hand?*" (1 Sam. xxvi. 18.) Christians find it no easy task to repress the flame of anger at unjust accusations, and to quench the rising passion, lest they should render evil for evil. But David achieved greater things

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in rendering good to those who without cause were his enemies. When the passionate Abishai turned his spear against Saul, David held him back, lest the anointed of God should fall by an assassin's hand. It is not with a desire to appear meritorious before God that he refers to that magnanimous deed, he rather reminds God and *himself* of the justice of his cause, for confidence in prayer is necessarily increased by the consciousness that we appear before our holy God in a just cause and with a clear conscience.

V. 7—9. Though refraining to be the judge of his own affairs, and well remembering the words of the Lord, "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense," he deemed it proper to invite him to action who has undertaken the work of recompense on earth; thus he said to Saul, "The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee; but mine hand shall not be upon thee." (1 Sam. xxiv. 12.) Anxious to show that he desires not the gratification of personal revenge, but that God should assert his dignity as the judge of the world, he calls upon God to institute a judgment on all nations and their iniquities, only hoping that his own cause might be regarded as one of the innumerable ones which the righteous Judge could not suffer to remain unpunished. Most of us almost entirely forget, on witnessing the countless transgressions of law which daily transpire within our sight, that they are all recorded in the memory of the righteous Judge of the world. But David sees with his mind's eye how that Judge who *forgets* no sins, save those which he *forgives* on the condition of faith and repentance, comes down from heaven, mounts the tribunal, collects the world before it, gives sentence in a moment, and reascends to heaven. Although appearances go in a thousand instances against that faith, we dare not doubt the possibility of its being at any given moment evidenced as a fact.

V. 10. He raises that petition which flows from every Christian heart on reading in the Lord's prayer the words, "Deliver us from evil." Such desires are not vain imaginings. The very fact that they may so powerfully well forth from pious hearts, is an evidence that at some future period they will meet their fulfilment.

V. 11—14. David is none of those pious dreamers, who, lost in their contemplation as to what God may do in heaven and hereafter, forget what he is daily doing on earth within the sight of all. He perceives that *His* sword is whetted already, that *His* bow is bent, and that the arrow lingers on the string simply because the long-suffering of God is as great as his justice, and because he is waiting even for the repentance of a Saul. Instruments of death and flaming arrows point to the custom of the ancients, who having enveloped their arrows in combustible matter, lighted and then sent them off.

V. 15—17. David equally perceives that God is not obliged to send down from heaven the rods to chastise, and flaming arrows to

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destroy the wicked, but that they are everywhere present on earth. In innumerable instances the wicked prepare their own scourge in their wickedness, and perish by their own iniquities; as Luther says, "Whence could God get ropes enough to hang every thief, if they did not do it themselves?" and as the Prophet says, "The strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them." (Isaiah i. 31.)

V. 18. The manner of his concluding shows the truthfulness of his beginning the psalm with "O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust;" for *we* repeatedly forget to thank God *after*, David thanks God *before*, the reception of benefits, singing praise to the name of the Most High, while the present furnishes him only with themes of complaint.

PSALM VIII.

A PSALM of praise, like Psalm iv. composed at night, and equally sublime, calm, and solemn. The solemn peace and brightness of an eastern nocturnal sky seem to be shed on it. David may have composed it when he was feeding his father Jesse's sheep on the plains of Bethlehem. (1 Sam. xvii. 15.)

The fundamental idea of this beautiful psalm is the glory of God on earth, as it appears to man, the noblest of his earthly creatures. The eyes of the Psalmist repose at night upon the infinite starry heavens: the more he is lost in the contemplation of their glory, and the more he considers that glory shed there in such lavish majesty, as to render it hardly credible that there should have remained any for the earth, the greater is his astonishment when reverting his look he meets the same revelation of Divine majesty on earth. He beholds it in the noblest of God's creatures—in man, and that in his earliest development—in the faltering accents of sucklings, (v. 3.) The dominion of the Spirit makes itself known in the faculty of speech; herein man resembles God; and makes him the priest and king of nature, the head of the visible creation, (v. 4—9.)

1 TO the chief Musician, to the tune of Gath, A Psalm of David.

2 O LORD our Lord,
How excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!
Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

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8 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings
Hast thou ordained strength (prepared for thyself an army)
Because of thine enemies,
That thou mightest still the enemy and the adversary.
4 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast prepared;
5 What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
6 For thou hast made him a little lower than God,
And hast crowned him with glory and honour.
7 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
Thou hast put all *things* under his feet:
8 All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field;
9 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
And whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
10 O LORD our Lord,
How excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!

V. 2. We see the Psalmist, lost in the contemplation of the brilliancy of the skies, which seems to eclipse everything else, turn back to the earth and himself. Some in gazing upon the splendour of the heavens forget the glories of earth, and others absorbed in the glory of earth have no eyes for the majesty of heaven. David adopts the proper course, in using the infinity of heaven as a means of expressing with deeper humility his gratitude to God for what he possesses on earth. Had he felt inclined to speak of the glories of the earth, he might have referred to the immeasurable deep, to the heads of the everlasting hills, to the wonders above and the wonders below, to leviathan in the waters and the unicorn in the desert. (Job xxxix. xli.) If he had enumerated all these, he would still have omitted that handiwork of God, wherein the brightest effulgency of his glory is to be found—man created in the image of God.

V. 3. He regards man from his tender infancy, and from the first traces of awakening mind. The strength which God has prepared for himself out of the *mouth* of babes we cannot refer to anything characteristic of infancy except the faculty of speech: it is no objection to this view that "babes and *sucklings*" are mentioned; for the word in the original for "babes," describes those that are able to walk, (see Lam. i. 5,) and Hebrew mothers used to suckle their infants down to their third year. The Psalmist, therefore, though naming sucklings, may nevertheless think of

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their faculty of speech. That faculty of speech, which indicates the existence of mind in even the tender age of childhood (not to make mention of other marvels belonging to the world of children,) is a veritable army of God against his adversaries, against those that would deprive him of the glory which is his due. The Psalmist seems to have chosen his justification of God against his adversaries from the marvels of infant age, because, as nature and history combine to show, Divine omnipotence takes a peculiar delight to confound his enemies by the instrumentality of the weak and unseemly. Our Lord cited this very expression of the Psalmist, when the high priests and scribes were displeased with the *children*, crying in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David:" and when they said, "Hearest thou what these say?" Jesus replied, "Yea, have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Matt. xxi. 16.) As though he had said, Has not Divine omnipotence always held the little ones and the unseemly, worthy of the dignity to herald forth and testify to his glory, when the great ones of the earth have arrogantly despised it?

V. 4—6. The silence of the Psalmist about the noblest luminary of heaven—the sun—reference being made to the moon and the stars only, has led to the just inference that he composed this psalm at night. The transparent clearness of the eastern nocturnal sky, and the splendour of its stars, are far superior to ours. He calls the heavens "the work of God's fingers," to designate it as a work of art immeasurably beyond any work of art prepared by human fingers. It is said in the book of Job (xxxvi. 29, xxxviii. 33,) "Can any understand the spreading of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle?" "Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? He then speaks of the rulers of night—the moon and the stars, which certainly impress us with a more profound sense of the majesty of God than the sun himself, seeing that they spread away on the illimitable expanse of heaven, and enter into distances more remote than human eye can scan. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." (Isaiah xl. 26.)

V. 5—7. If such riches of splendour and majesty are shed on the heavens above till lost in infinity, who would expect to find the same glorious God on earth? We must not suffer our eyes to get so dazzled with the splendours aloft, that we become insensible to the recognition of the mercy and glory of God, with which his paths on earth are overflowing. Would God be as great as he is, if he were only great in the heights but not in the depths—in the great but not in the small? He has created man in his image on

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earth; how then can that earth be mean over which He has placed his image as king and ruler? David alludes to the ancient record which says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth." When at the close of the sixth day the earth stood arrayed in her spring garments, swelling with riches on her surface and in her depths, with flocks on her plains, beasts in her forests, birds in the air, fish in the waters, the treasury of metals in her bowels, standing like a temple waiting for its priest—God created man and instituted him priest in that temple. The word of God gave existence to everything else; but into *man* he breathed his *Spirit*, and made him by the light of his reason and the holiness of his will his representative before his other creatures on earth. While others get conscious of this dignity in pride and haughtiness, David, lost in meek admiration, adores his Lord.

V. 8, 9. This king of the earth enters his realm as weak, as naked, and helpless as any other creature, and is not adult man, externally considered, the most defenceless of creatures? The lion has his tooth, the crocodile its coat of mail, the birds their wings, the fish their fins; but which is man's weapon for attack, which his shield for defence? The *Spirit from God:* therefore all must obey him. The cattle on the pastures, wild beasts roaming the forest, birds flying below the expanse of heaven, fish swimming in the depths of the sea, they all must obey him—man is their lord and king. Aye, if our hearts were in that condition and relation to God, in which they ought to be, (the relation of feudal lord and feudal servant,) every new victory which we gain over surrounding nature, every sacrifice offered to us by the animal or vegetable kingdoms, by the depths of the sea or the entrails of mountains, and which subserve to our nourishment or clothing, the produce of art or the inquiries of science, would elicit psalms of gratitude and praise from our hearts. Is not our outward helplessness and indigence by the side of our inward strength and riches, a powerful admonition that these goods are the gifts of Divine munificence? But elated by arrogance the feudal servant has rebelled against his feudal lord. We ought to consider ourselves servants, but rise as independent lords of creation; we ought to be the priests of God, re-offering to him, and using for his glory, whatsoever his creation has provided for us, but have become idolaters, worshipping the idols of our own selves. It is one of the effects of that rebellion, that our royal sceptre became broken, and that only a fragment of it remains in our hands. Although a great portion of creation yields even now to the inquiries, and is submissive to the will of man, our present knowledge and power are but poor fragments of the glory which we were originally destined to enjoy. Though by the aid of multiform art and means we succeed in the subjugation

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of a portion of nature, we cannot but feel how remote is our dominion from that of which it is said, "He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast." The presentiment of such a dominion has again been experienced since the time when we beheld the perfect image of God on earth, who by the simple act of his holy will could quench disease, sway his sceptre over death, command the storm, and walk on the waves of the deep. *The Son, who alone is free indeed, can make us free too.* (John viii. 36.) This is the reason why this passage, that "All things are put under his feet," is applied in the New Testament to him, in whom God and man were manifested in perfect unity. (1 Cor. xv. 27.)

V. 10. The Psalmist concludes with the same exulting praise with which he began; and on comparing the conclusion with the beginning we find, that David mainly contemplated the celebration of the glory of God on earth.

PSALM IX.

A PSALM of thanksgiving, followed by new complaint. So in Psalm xxxi. 8, 9, complaint is preceded by joyous hope and (v. 15) again succeeded by resignation. (cf. Ps. xl.) Transitions of this kind will not surprise those who are familiar with the ways of our inner life and experienced in the school of prayer. The heart of man is in hours of tribulation like the pendulum of a clock, which oscillates from the right to the left—now from God, then to him; or like a wave—now rising, now falling, now elevated by hope, now crushed by despair. The history of David yields incidents which may more clearly explain the triumph in the first part, and the complaint and supplication in the second part, of this psalm. When David had led his armies victoriously against the kings of Syria in the north, and extended the boundaries of his dominion, the Bedouin tribes of the Edomites embraced the opportunity to invade the land destitute of troops from the south. That event also occasioned the composition of Psalm lx. We shall show in the introduction to that psalm, that that event must have been very disastrous and perilous to David's kingdom, as the hostile army might have reached the capital after a march of two or three days. Assuming the composition of the psalm to have taken place at that crisis, both the triumph at the beginning and the complaint and supplications towards the end are sufficiently explained. Difficulties arise, however, from Psalm x. which in many points, chiefly towards the close, so strongly resembles Psalm ix. that it might

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almost be regarded (especially because it has no title,) as a continuation of the latter, or at least be referred to the same period and the same author. But it seems less admissible to refer Psalm x. to the oppression of the country by the invading hosts of the Edomites, because it seems rather to speak of anarchy among the inhabitants themselves: again it seems hardly credible that if such a state of things really ever existed during the reign of David, the *same* king who (Ps. ci. 3—5) so emphatically declares his administration of justice, should instead of wielding the sword of justice, nevertheless have indulged in complaints like those in Psalm x. It will be seen in the introduction to Psalm x. that those difficulties may be overcome, and paying special regard to Ps. x. 16, it will after all be the best plan to refer Psalm x. to the same event.

The one experience of God's victorious aid against his enemies, which David celebrates (v. 2—7,) causes him, like a pious man, to revert to the everlasting truth, that the Lord rules the world in righteousness, (v. 8—13.) Strengthened by this thought, he prays the more trustfully, that the Governor of the world would, under the present national calamity, protect the rights of the oppressed, lest impotent man should deem himself stronger than Him who has declared himself as the Refuge of Israel.

1 TO the chief Musician to the tune, "Death to the son,"
A Psalm of David.
2 I will praise *thee*, O Lord, with my whole heart;
I will show forth all thy marvellous works.
3 I will be glad and rejoice in thee:
I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High,
4 Because mine enemies are turned back,
And did fall and perish at thy presence.
5 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause;
Thou satest in the throne judging right.
6 Thou hast rebuked the heathen,
Thou hast destroyed the wicked,
Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.
7 The destructions of the enemy are come to a perpetual end:
And thou hast destroyed their cities;
Their (the enemies') memorial is perished with them.
8 But the LORD shall endure for ever:
He hath prepared his throne for judgment.
9 And he shall judge the world in righteousness,
He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.
10 The LORD also will be a refuge for the poor,
A refuge in times of trouble.

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11 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee.
For thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.
12 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion:
Declare among the people his doings.
13 When he maketh inquiry for blood, he remembereth them:
He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.
14 Have mercy upon me, O LORD;
Consider my trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate me.
Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:
15 That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion:
I will rejoice in thy salvation.
16 The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made:
In the net which they hid is their own foot taken.
17 The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth:
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.
Meditation! Selah.
18 The wicked shall be turned into Sheol,
And all the heathen that forget God.
19 For the needy shall not alway be forgotten:
The expectation of the poor shall *not* perish for ever.
20 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail:
Let the heathen be judged in thy sight.
21 Put them in fear, O LORD:
That the heathen may know themselves *to be but* men.
Selah.

V. 2—4. Whenever the banners of his army wave victoriously, or the frontiers of his empire get extended, David seeks the theme of his praise, not in his own feats of heroism, nor in the strategy and valour of his generals and people, but in *Jehovah*. He calls the deeds of his God *marvellous works*. In proportion to the humility of the recipient of Divine favours is his readiness to regard his experiences as marvellous; for he not only sees God in every event, but deems himself utterly unworthy of his blessed experience. The proper way of celebrating our victories is unquestionably after the manner of David, to triumph and rejoice in God, and to sing praise to the name of the Most High, and not in foolish reliance on our own strength to harden our hearts, or to turn giddy in the boast of our wisdom and resources.

V. 5—9. While other heroes acknowledge only blind chance as presiding over battle fields, and dispensing victory, David looks upon the scene of contest as a judgment, and beholds hovering above it the judgment-seat of God, on which the Lord of lords is

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enthroned, of whom it is written, "He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." (Daniel ii. 21.) Confidence of this kind will inspire armies and their leaders with courage, if conscious that they fight for a just cause, and consider the battle-field as the judgment-seat of the Ruler of the world. Though God sometimes permits the just cause to succumb, and the unjust to triumph in the scene of action, such victories are only transient; and if but the holy flame, lighted by the consciousness of a just cause, do not expire in the hearts of the conquered, are sure to issue in the final subjugation of unjust powers. Nay, the transient defeats of those engaged in a just combat, will from the nature of the case, become the means of fanning their courage and daring to a brighter flame, and then adduce final victory. The foe had but lately celebrated his triumphs, and filled the cities and the country with his triumphal shouts. Now the cities lie in ruins, the mouth of the haughty silenced in death; and the Lord has shown that however arrogant may be the bearing of man, no human power can ever push him from his throne. Hence David's faith infers, from this single act of God's judgment, that, however much human circumstances may give way and the righteous be crushed under foot, the Lord will continue to judge the world in righteousness, while it shall last. This single assistance of God in the past, is to David a gate through which he passes with intrepid confidence to spread before the Lord his complaints in present affliction.

V. 10, 11. The victorious king knew himself but recently rich and mighty, but aware that the Lord loves to humble the lofty, he did not triumph without fear: now knowing himself poor and oppressed, he is of good courage, aware that the Lord loves to glorify himself in their *seeking* him, as he well knew from his own experience.

V. 12, 13. Praise for past mercies blends with that of hope for the future. He feels sure that God, who has called himself a God "of great faithfulness," will not at that time become untrue to his name, provided the poor seek not within themselves for refuge, but show by crying to Heaven that their strength is of God. He not only calls upon himself, but, because he prays for a national cause, upon all the people, to celebrate the praises of God for his past and future mercies.

V. 14, 15. *Prayer* succeeds his *praise*. He prays in faith who calls God, "Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death." That name, if it is not quoted from books, but learnt in the school of life, and actually confirmed by multiform experience, will be like a rock, on which the man of prayer may take his stand, and raised above every earthly source of doubt, know that he is more near to

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heaven. He is none of those who pray in distress only, but omit to pray after help has come: no, David prays for help, *that he may shew forth the praise of God in louder and more joyous strains, in the gates of the daughter of Zion*, viz. in those gatherings and assemblies which used to be held at the city-gates.

V. 16, 17. Faith translates the future into the present: the eye of faith sees the work as already accomplished. They have dug pits. The proposal is man's, the disposal God's. His judgments which are daily transpiring within our sight, but are noticed by the eye of faith alone, show that the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands, and caught in the net which he had set for others. This is a passage, at the performance of which song ceased, and a musical interlude took place to facilitate the meditation which is expressly solicited. (Cf. ad. Ps. iii. 5.)

V. 18, 19. The Psalmist soars from the separate judgment of the heathen, who had attacked the possession of God, because they had forgotten him, to the hope of that time when all their attacks shall be confounded, and the hope of the afflicted saints become visibly manifest. (Cf. ad. Ps. vii. 10.)

V. 20, 21. David invokes the mighty arm of God to arise, that the heathen may know the God of Israel, and the false delusion be destroyed that any mortal can oppose and prevail against him. Indeed, not only the heathen, but we all, require the occasional powerful manifestation of the arm of God, (for, though servants, we are given to the delusion that we are lords,) that if we refuse to get softened by his love, he humble us by his terrors.

PSALM X.

We stated in the introduction to Psalm ix. that the connection of the two psalms favours the view which refers this Psalm to the period when the Edomites invaded the country then stripped of troops. We may infer from the customs of the Edomite Bedouins, that previous to their collecting and advancing a large army, separate hordes had invaded the southern districts, and rapaciously spread themselves. We learn from the historic records, that after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the abduction of the greater portion of its inhabitants, the hostile neighbouring nations invaded the deserted country, and Psalm lxxiv. 20 says, that the whole country was filled with dens of robbers. A similar condition may have ensued from the invasion of the Edomites in the southern districts, for some time had necessarily to elapse before the army,

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which David had sent from Syria, headed by Joab and Abishai, could reach the spot. The wicked are indeed described in terms which would better apply to ungodly Israelites, but the heathen are similarly spoken of in Psalms lxxiv. 10, lxxix. 10, xciv. 7, and it was but natural that the humiliation of the nation which so boldly boasted of the protection of their God, should pour the contempt of the heathen on him. (Isaiah xxxvii. 38.) The wicked are said (v. 7) to have done much mischief with their *tongues*, which cannot well apply to hostile troops. Supposing the country as occupied for some time by the Edomite Bedouins, it is a fair question whether their intercourse with the oppressed people might not have led to cursing and fraud, deceit and overbearing threats; as *e. g.* Isaiah describes the Jews complaining against Moab: "We have heard of the pride of Moab, he is very proud: even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath." (Isaiah xvi. 6.) The rapacity which despises God, and makes its lust (arrogance) its God, described in verses 8, 4, has a complete parallel in what Habakuk says of the rapacity of the Chaldeans: "They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net and gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoice and are glad. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag: because by them their portion is fat and their meat plenteous. Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?" (Hab. i. 15—17.) Verse 8 needs not be taken literally, as it may be regarded as a figure taken from a robber; but if the Psalm refers to the invasions of the Edomites, it is strikingly illustrated by enemies, who promiscuously pitched their Bedouin tents, to carry on from there their depredations.*

The psalm begins in sorrowful strains, invoking the manifestation of Divine justice, because the rapacious foe makes himself equal to God and heeds not his judgments, (v. 1—6.) David separately describes the violence of the oppressors as seen in their speech and works, and states that the delay of punishment rendered their obduracy the more confirmed, as his reasons for evoking the righteousness of God, (v. 7—11,) and bases thereon his appeal to the Ruler of the world, (v. 12, 13,) but forthwith gathers such strength of confidence, that he proclaims with undoubting certainty, that the Lord will also at this time show that he is the King of Israel, (v. 14—18.)

* See Morgenland and Abendland, Stuttg. 1841, vol. ii. p. 305, which mentions robberies on the way to Jericho, stating, "That here more than anywhere else cruelties have been committed, is owing to the vicinity of the savage Bedouins, who *pitch their moveable camps* to the right of this road along the Dead Sea, and plunder travellers as opportunities present themselves." The Edomites took this identical road from the south along the Dead Sea. Cf. Introd. to Ps. lx. and Note (*) of Introd. to Ps. lxxxiii.

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1 WHY standest thou afar off, O LORD?
Why hidest thou *thyself* in times of trouble?
2 The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor:
They (the poor) are taken in the devices that they (the wicked) have imagined.
3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire,
The covetous blesseth it (his desire,) and contemneth the LORD.
4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, thinks *God* will not punish.
All his thoughts are, "*There is* no God."
5 His ways are always prosperous,
Thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight:
As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.
6 He hath said in his heart, "I shall not be moved:
For *I shall* never *be* in adversity."
7 His mouth is full of cursing and oppression and fraud:
His tongue worketh mischief and iniquity.
8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages:
In the secret places doth he murder the innocent:
His eyes are privily set against the poor.
9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den:
He lieth in wait to catch the poor:
He doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.
10 He croucheth, *and* humbleth (or "stoopeth down") himself,
That the poor may fall by his strong ones (claws.)
11 He hath said in his heart, "God hath forgotten:
He hideth his face, he will never see *it*."
12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand:
Forget not the afflicted.
13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?
He hath said in his heart, "Thou wilt not require *it*."
14 Thou hast seen *it;*
For thou beholdest mischief and spite; thou markest it on thine hand:
The poor committeth himself unto thee;
Thou art the helper of the fatherless.
15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil *man:*
Seek out his wickedness *till* thou find none.
16 The LORD *is* King for ever and ever:
The heathen are perished out of his land.

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17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the afflicted,
Thou wilt strengthen their heart,
Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:
18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed.
That man, who is of the earth, may no more resist thee.

V. 1. We are prone, when misfortune and helplessness oppress us, to regard God as standing afar off, because goodness and power belong to his being; nor unjustly so, for however much the presence of God within us may strengthen our hearts in desperate circumstances, the existence of outward trouble is always a sign that our unity with God is not yet completely established nor manifested in its last effects, which, however, can never take place on earth.

V. 2, 3. Where wickedness has led to victory and proud lust gained its end, is it matter of surprise that they who already are at open rebellion with God make their own pride their god, and pay to it the sacrifices which rightfully belong to the Ruler of the world? It becomes thus manifest that the work of the wicked cannot well prosper without leading to the idolatry of sin and the contempt of God. David feels himself justified to call the Almighty to action.

V. 4. Though gross offenders do not always verbally deny the existence of God, such denial is virtually involved in the disbelief of God's punitive justice. To believe in the God of heaven above and not to be afraid of his judgment to come, does it signify anything else than the denial of the very attribute which causes the pious to bend their knees before him? If God were really confined to heaven, as the wicked says in Job xxii. 13, 14, "How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not; and he walketh in the circuit of heaven;" who would feel inclined to pray to so Epicurean a God, and pay to him the sacrifices of obedience and thanksgiving?

V. 5, 6. It is true, indeed, that in isolated instances, at least, the judgments of God keep for a long time remote from the wicked: hence the arrogance of his appearance and the delusion of his security for the future. God, as is here stated, often suffers the works of the wicked to prosper for a long time, but he suffers it solely that the fall from his height be the more terrific, and he share the fate of Nebuchadnezzar, in whose fall the people thus rejoiced: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" (Isaiah xiv. 12.)

V. 7—11. The Psalmist now details the violence of the enemy. His aim is to assure the hearts of the pious that the display of

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God's power will eventually take place. He describes the haughty derisions and threats of the tongue, which victorious and oppressive nations are wont to utter against the oppressed—pictures them as robbers hid in the lurking places of the villages, and as lions lying in ambush in their dens to catch unwary passers by. They would refrain from such conduct if they did believe in a God who will never forsake his children, and whose eyes are always looking upon the earth. (Psalm xi. 4.)

V. 12—14. David now calls upon God to bring their contemptuous speech to nought and their untruth to light: he asserts his remoteness from such unbelief, and his conviction that every oppression of the afflicted is actually inscribed upon the hand of God. He derives great consolation from the very attributes by which God has described himself, as when *e. g.* he calls himself "The helper of the fatherless." The poor may confidently commit their cause to him, not only as their wisest *Advocate*, but as their *Father*, as the Father of all who have no father on earth.

V. 15, 16. Animated by this faith he confidently asserts that the arm of strength, now defyingly set against heaven, will be broken. He finds not sufficient protection and consolation for his people in his own royal dignity, but the *Lord* is king for ever and ever. He knows how to preserve his faithful subjects and to expel the heathen.

V. 17, 18. Behold! how his faith is changed into sight. His prayer is heard, God himself has put the holy assurance into his heart. The Lord in heaven will know how to justify his glory against the resistance of man whose home is the earth.

PSALM XI.

A PSALM of comfort, replete with filial trust, and clearly referring to the period of Saul's persecution. David sought and found an asylum for a great portion of these years of anguish in the high mountains of the wilderness of Judah not far from the Dead Sea. As he said to Saul: "The king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains." Saul had pursued him to the rocks of the wild goats, *i. e.* to the highest peaks, scaled by the wild goats only. It accords with history that David's enemies address him (v. 1) in the plural, for during the latter period of his flight he had six hundred faithful companions about him.

The beginning of the psalm seems to indicate that it was composed when David was on the plains, perhaps in some town or

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other, and that this speech proceeded either from well-meaning friends or mocking enemies. Indignantly but in childlike confidence, and sure of his eternal foundation in God, he rebuts the supposition of a cowardly flight, though he confesses that the wicked invoke heaven and earth against the upright, and that his own resources are exhausted, (v. 1—3.) But he is sure that the Holy Lord sits enthroned as a spectator of these earthly tumults and commotions, who, though satisfied with looking on for a time, will eventually reveal himself as judge, (v. 4—7.)

1 TO the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David.

2 In the LORD put I my trust:
How say ye to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain?"
3 For, lo, the wicked bend *their* bow,
They make ready their arrow upon the string,
That they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.
4 If the foundations be destroyed,
What can the righteous do?
5 The LORD *is* in his holy temple,
The LORD'S throne *is* in heaven:
His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.
6 The LORD trieth the righteous:
But the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth.
7 Upon the wicked he shall rain lightnings,
Fire and brimstone, and a burning tempest:
This shall be the portion of their cup.
8 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness;
The upright behold his countenance.

V. 2. The well-meant counsel of unbelieving friends and the knowledge of the wicked, that should they succeed to deprive David of his God, he himself would be delivered into their hand, seemed to combine to drive him into despair. Firm of heart he heads this psalm with the confession, "In the Lord put I my trust," repelling thereby every temptation of hesitancy and fear. He had frequently sought an asylum on mountain heights, in caverns and chasms, against the pursuing storm. But here he means to say, that though having used every earthly means for safety, his confidence was not based on them, but on the eternal foundation of God in heaven. The wicked seek to grieve *him* by saying, that in the time of danger he knew no better refuge than that of the hunted bird, which tremblingly flies from the reach of man into

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the thicket of mountain woods. His bold faith despises his despisers and reproaches them for only knowing earthly mountains, but being utterly ignorant of the Rock of Ages, of that *God* "who was before the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and the world had been formed, even from everlasting to everlasting." (Psalm xc. 1.) He says that he used to to confide in the Eternal Rock even in those days, when he sought for shelter and refuge on the mountains of earth. For the godly in the use of earthly means ever remember that "except the *Lord* build the house, they labour in vain who build it; except the *Lord* keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." (Psalm cxxvii. 1.) In tilling the soil they say, "The one planteth, the other watereth, but *God* giveth the increase." (1 Cor. iii. 7.) Engaging in battle they cry, "The sword of the *Lord* and of Gideon," (Judges vii. 20,) for whenever Gideon is placed *before* the sword of the Lord, idolatry will ensue and the blessing vanish.

V. 3, 4. David shows why a feeble heart may be filled with hesitancy. The malice of the wicked not only stalks about in broad noonday, but they shoot their arrows at the godly in secret and in the dark. Thus the persecutions of the suspicious king equally embraced stratagem and open violence. David complains that the foundations are destroyed, for no prerogative whether Divine or human could any longer secure him against enmity unto death, (*i. e.* of Saul.) When even kings disregard justice and use the power conferred upon them not for the quenching but for the *practice* of tyranny, what is the righteous to do?

V. 5. Because all the resources of David are gone, and there is no helper for him on earth, he directs his looks to heaven. It is the chief evidence of our faith, to look to heaven for the light of salvation when darkness surrounds us here on earth. This seems easy; for almost all confess to the belief that God governs the world; but when hard and unheard-of afflictions scatter universal gloom around us, very few indeed are able to retain this faith as the anchor of their soul. David's faith is immovable: he knows that, however much justice, faith, and confidence may seem to have fled from the earth, he continues holy and unchangeable on his heavenly throne, who is able in a moment to reverse the most desperate condition. The Governor of the world apparently suffers "men to be as the creeping things that have no ruler over them," (Hab. i. 14,) but David is sure that the Keeper of Israel neither sleepeth nor slumbereth, that his eyes behold and his eyelids try the children of men, and that he will never suffer the eternal boundaries which separate right from wrong to be effaced.

V. 6—8. Now if the eternal boundaries of right and wrong can never be effaced from the memory of God, and if according to this eternal law he distinguishes between the godly and the ungodly, (though many days may pass before him in whose sight a day is as

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a thousand years, till his hour come,) that hour cannot fail to strike nor that day to dawn, when he will *effectively manifest* that distinction to the world. Sodom and Gomorrah with their fire and brimstone, the burnt shores of the Dead Sea, as David beheld them from the mountainous heights of the wilderness of Judah, along with numberless separate judgments of God as recorded in history, furnish the proofs that the final judgment of evil cannot fail to come. Because God is righteous and loveth righteousness, says David, therefore the day must come, when the upright shall behold his countenance for ever.

PSALM XII.

A PSALM of complaint, composed during the residence of David at the court of Saul, when haughty hypocrites threatened to destroy him by their tongue. (Cf. Introd. to Ps. v. and lii.)

He begins with a piteous complaint of the insolence of his many opponents, (v. 2—5.) Because to him applies what Paul said concerning himself, "We are perplexed, but not in despair," (2 Cor. iv. 8,) and because in spite of the storm which troubles his soul, faith has cast her anchor into firm ground, the prophetic word of God rises in his mind, that there is still help with the Lord, (v. 6.) Based on this word of God, the truth of which can never fail, his soul gets calmed, and he concludes in the enjoyment of profound peace, (v. 8, 9.)

1 TO the chief Musician, to the eighth tune, A Psalm of David.
2 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth;
For the faithful fail from among the children of men.
3 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour:
With flattering lips *and* with a double heart do they speak.
4 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips,
And the tongue that speaketh proud things:
5 Who have said, "With our tongue we will prevail;
Our lips *are* our own: who *is* lord over us?"
6 "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy,
Now will I arise," saith the LORD;
"I will set *him* in safety *from him that* puffeth at him."

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7 The words of the LORD *are* pure words:
As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.
8 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,
Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.
9 The wicked walk on every side,
Like the rising of a tempest upon the sons of men.

V. 2. God never permits the entire cessation of the godly, though the masses of men serve Moloch, Baal, or other idols. There remained, even in those days, a small band of the people of God. There were in Israel, Samuel and his school of prophets faithful to God, with whom David took refuge when Saul's tyranny began to persecute him unto death. (1 Sam. xix. 18.) Among the corrupt courtiers themselves a faithful Jonathan was found. The small company of the godly seems almost to vanish among the multitude of the carelesss and impious—especially when they get afraid. It happened thus to David, though he was not altogether devoid of courage, for he states in this passage and verses 6. 8, that there was still a remnant left. Our experience, alas, shows only too often how prone we are in desponding moods to doubt the existence of any good men on earth, and to opine that the Church has never seen worse times than ours. The example of David should teach us, on the one hand, that true faith, just because its glory is so difficult to be recognized by the carnal eye, has never been more general; and on the other, that it (true faith) is so indispensable to men, that the generation of the godly has never wholly ceased.

V. 3—5. Realizing the condition of the people, with whom he daily commingles, he denounces their hypocrisy and pride. Where calumny leads to gain, as was the case at the court of Saul (who incited it by promised reward, (1 Sam. xxii. 8,) wicked confidence in a lying tongue is sure to exist in those who owe their prosperity to their wickedness, and who, like the robber in Ps. x. 3, ascribe that praise to their tongue, which belongs to God. Their unbelieving delusion emboldens them to assert that they are masters of their destiny and to disclaim the authority of the Lord in heaven. Could a pious man like David be the spectator of such atrocious conduct without supplicating Heaven, that, however much the godly might be willing to suffer *their* honour to be laid low, the Lord of heaven and earth would not suffer them with impunity to contemn his?

V. 6. Hark! the Divine voice rises from the lowest chamber of his heart. Faith, nourished by the word of God, is indeed an oracle within us, whose voice we hear in every gloomy hour. The oracle proclaims to him that though God protract his vengeance, his help will not fail for ever.

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V. 7. He seeks to strengthen himself with his consciousness of the infallibility of the words of the Lord, by comparing them with purest silver that has been purified seven times. The peculiar emphasis with which David speaks of the infallibility of this Divine sentence, renders it probable that we must regard it less as an intuition of his faith, as they occur elsewhere, (Ps. xii. 7; xxxvi. 1; xlix. 5; l. 7, *etc.*) than the prophetic utterance of Samuel, Gad, or some other prophet. We feel the blessings of Scripture passages thus inscribed upon the heart, when in hours of affliction and just at the right moment, faith brings them to our remembrance, and applies them to the confirmation of our hopes. David, as a prophet, had undoubtedly experienced the utterance of the Divine voice in his own heart; but history adduces likewise instances which show that he derived edification from the words of the prophets. The oracle from which he gathers confidence (Ps. lx. 8. 10) seems to point to a similar prophetic communication.

V. 8. Prayer, inspired by the Spirit of God, always comprehends universal need in the particular, and the pious, in praying for himself, actually prays for all the pious. So David, as the representative of the small band of the godly in his time, virtually prays for all godly men. He conceives of the human race as divided into two camps and two generations, the one of whom fight in huge masses and great strength, while the other, though small in number and with little strength of their own, advance under the banner of *that God* who has promised victory to the righteous cause. David denies not that the generation of the children of this world enjoy for the time being many victories and great power, and even owns that their machinations and oppressions frequently cause the earth to shake as from an earthquake, and so to perplex the godly that he hardly knows where to establish himself. But he suffers not these thoughts to weaken his courage, provided the gate of prayer be open, and the small and oppressed band be sure that the Mighty God is on their side.

PSALM XIII.

A PSALM of complaint, composed when persecution had raged for a long time, troubled him, and made his enemy more overbearing. Hence we infer that it belongs to the latter period of Saul's persecution.

The complaint of this psalm is one of gentle grief, expressing the fear that the enemy will after all prevail, (v. 2—5.) But the

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mercy of a God, who is ready to help, once more consoles David, who, animated by this hope, publishes his praise, (v. 7.)

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

2 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD?
For ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?
3 How long shall I grieve in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart daily?
How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
4 Consider *and* hear me, O LORD, my God:
Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of* death;
5 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him;
And those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.
6 But I have trusted in thy mercy;
My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.
7 I will sing unto the LORD,
Because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

V. 2, 3. The anxious question, "How long?" occurs four times; an anxious question, familiar to those who have like David been trained in the school of sorrows. If, on the one hand, they complain that the *continuance* of suffering involves a greater trial than its *strength*, they confess on the other, that continued heat is needed to show whether the plant of faith be deeply rooted. David complains that God has forgotten him; this does not imply that faith was really extinct in his soul (for the end of this Psalm shows his childlike hope in God.) Just as nobody can prevent the birds from flying to his head, though he may prevent their building a nest, so probably no pious man could ever forbid tempting thoughts to pass transiently through his soul in gloomy hours, when all signs of the nearness of God were absent. David at once corrects his expression by stating that the Lord God is still with him, and only laments his inability to see his joy-giving countenance. Four times he raises his "How long?" We ought to know the Divine reply. It ever runs: *"Till thou art matured in the heat of tribulation."*

V. 4, 5. His eye is already dim like his who hastens to the grave. (Cf. Psalm vi. 8.) He prays that he may not sleep the sleep of death. He cannot brook the thought that his enemy has triumphed over him. If it had been simply his own cause he could have borne the sting thereof; when, however, as in the case of David, who was anointed as king over Israel, and in this respect hopefully thought of by the small band of his pious cotemporaries, (1 Sam. xxv. 30,) the truth of God itself is at stake, and the derision of the wicked applies less to the servant of God than to the

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Lord himself, its sting is unbearable to a pious heart. However, as the godly live in a world where evil of every kind is met by the long suffering of God, and as experience shows many a sanguinary Saul transformed into a Paul, it is proper that they should strengthen themselves against such trials of their faith, and admire the long-suffering of God, who in many instances permits men to despise with impunity his honour, simply because his love will give the tare the chance of becoming good wheat. It was doubtless no small trial of faith when Stephen, the first martyr, expired beneath the falling stones, and Saul witnessed it with triumphant joy. There were probably even at that time some Christians present who, in their zeal for the honour of God, were praying for a flash of lightning to descend on the head of Saul! But none of them guessed what the Lord had decreed in his eternal counsel.

V. 6, 7. We notice again that David founds his hope neither on his merits nor on his just cause, "But I have trusted in THY MERCY." Oh, that the struggling mind would not in its afflictions part with the consciousness, that *a God* merciful and ready to help is the witness of all the spectacles of our conflicts, who in permitting them to continue can only have GRACIOUS motives. Thunder and lightning are as yet round David while he sings his songs of praise; as Luther has observed, "While Satan raged around him he used quietly to sing his little psalm."

PSALM XIV.

A PSALM of complaint. It is doubtful whether v. 7 originally belongs to it. It was probably added as a liturgical expression during the Babylonish captivity, to which it would admirably apply, (Psalm liii. with some variations, still more expressly applies to it.) This seems to have been the case with Psalms xxv. xxxiv. li. lxix. The final words of the Lord's prayer, according to Matthew, are a similar liturgical addition. If v. 7 belong *not* to this psalm, we may unhesitatingly assume that David composed it at the court of Saul, under circumstances similar to Psalm xii. (Cf. v. 1.) But if it do, then David composed it as king, for Zion is mentioned as the sanctuary of God. In the latter case David, who calls himself, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, "The sweet *Psalmist of Israel*," may have composed it for the use of the people at worship. There is certainly this objection. In Psalm ci. which all ascribe to David, he says, with a royal sense of justice, "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the

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Lord." (Psalm cvii. 7, 8.) Now is it probable that during the reign of so determined a ruler, prevalence of the ungodly over the people of God could have been affirmed in such unqualified terms? But *parænetic* songs at public worship, do not so much describe the actual condition, as they represent the general relations of the wicked to the godly, which renders this objection by no means decisive. Since, however, the final verses of several psalms appear to belong to a later period, and there are other peculiarities,* we incline to the view which regards v. 7 as a liturgical addition. David states here, as in Psalm xii., that the mass of men have forsaken God, and resist his true servants, (v. 1—8.) He prophecies in the name of God their certain destruction, (v. 4, 5,) and confidently assures them of their inability to prevail, (v. 6.)

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

2 The fool hath said in his heart, "*There* is no God."
They are corrupt, they have done abominable works,
There is none that doeth good.

3 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there were many that did understand, and ask for God.

4 They are all gone aside,
They are *all* together become filthy:
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.

5 "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And call not upon the LORD."

6 There were they in great fear:
For God *is* in the generation of the righteous.

7 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor,
But the LORD *is* his refuge.

8 Oh, that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion!
When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

V. 2. The Psalmist inquires for the reason why the great mass of mankind will not refrain from the commission of sin by legal restraints or humane considerations. He accounts for it from the fact that they are devoid of faith in the living God, who manifests

* We allude *e. g.* to the circumstance that in Psalms xxv. and xxxiv. the respective verses successively occur in the order of the Hebrew alphabet, and that just the final verses of both psalms go beyond the last letter of the alphabet.

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himself by his judgments; for were it otherwise, though legal restraints and humane considerations cannot effect it, yet would their fear of his holy eye, and his unfailing punishments, set a boundary to their recklessness. Inveterate blindness alone can deny the existence of God, when nature and history utter their myriads of voices to the contrary. Hence David, and the Scriptures in general, call the denier of God a *fool* and a *madman*, while v. 2 assigns wisdom only to such who make the fear of the righteous Judge the law of their lives.

V. 3, 4. Since the unspeakable long-suffering of God permits months and years to elapse before we read in the destinies of man indisputable marks that our holy God lays human affairs to heart, David represents God as having for a time refrained from taking any interest in the world, and as awakening suddenly to the exercise of his office. Just as if the humble followers of God (v. 5) were lost to his sight, and his eyes were only resting on evil doers. Their sin is described in gradation. They do *not understand*, because a true knowledge of things divine forms the basis of proper conduct towards God; they do *not ask for God*, because they only care for him whose clear and sure insight apprehends him as their highest possession; they are *gone aside*, because he who cares not for him is sure to get estranged from him, and to deviate from his paths; and they are *all together become filthy*, (*i. e.* worthless,) because man's proper strength and fitness for virtue must well from the fountain of communion with God.

V. 5, 6. As in Psalm xii. 6, the believing Psalmist heard the Divine oracle in the midst of earthly confusion, so here. So Micah, the prophet, addresses the heads of Jacob, and the princes of the house of Israel, who know not God, "Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron." (Micah iii. 3.) The *people of God* are, as shows v. 5, and other passages, (Ps. xxiv. 6, lxxii. 2, lxxiii. 1, cxii. 2; Ezek. xiii. 9; Jer. vii. 23, xxiv. 7,) the generation of the righteous, the true Jacob and Israel of God. (Psalm lxxiii. 1.) When the Lord, whom they thought firm asleep, shall raise his voice, and they shall perceive that he is awake, and that he will in his own time show his royal sceptre to pride-intoxicated man, then shall terror overtake them, and they shall find that they did not strive against man but against God.

V. 7. David now addresses the haughty mockers of the simplicity of the faithful, who in their misery quietly wait for God as their Saviour. The carnal mind thinks nothing more foolish than to see the pious, while the feet of wicked men crush them with impunity, with a calmness amounting to utter disregard, continue in the praise of God. Would *faith* be needed if the heavens were to rend, and the hand of God to appear every time when the godly

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endure violence? Hence the godly acquiesce in the *delays* of God and continue to confide in him, though their own counsel come a thousand times to nought. They know that the cessation of human counsel gives free scope to the Divine.

V. 8. The expression, "Bringeth back the captivity of his people," does not by any means always refer to real captivity, of which Psalm lxxxv. furnishes the clearest proof. Then after deliverance from the exile, the bringing of the captivity is implored; many passages show this more or less clearly. (Psalm cxlvi. 7; Job xliii. 10; Ezek. xvi. 53, cf. 55; Zeph. iii. 20; Jer. xxx. 18; Hos. vi. 1. 11.) Even Deut. xxx. 3, is to some extent a figurative expression, which serves to denote the *turning of all misery*. Since the people of God have above been described as the generation of the righteous, these words may convey the sense that David implores the aid of God for all the righteous in Israel who are afflicted and oppressed, to the end, that the whole nation, restored and renewed in righteousness, might sing praises unto the Lord. But from the similarity of the final verses in other psalms, it is better to regard this last verse as a liturgical addition made during the Babylonish captivity.

PSALM XV.

THIS festive song was occasioned by David's removing the ark of the covenant from Kirjath Jearim (according to Eusebius between five and six miles from Jerusalem,) where, since its return from the land of the Philistines, it had been for upwards of sixty years, in solemn procession to Zion the seat of royalty. (2 Sam. vi.; 1 Chron. xiii. 14.) The rashness of Uzzah had, as is well known, for a time prevented the execution of the design, for David, terror-struck, took the ark to the house of Obed-edom the Levite, which was by the roadside. But three months later its execution took place. The solemn procession was headed by priests playing the cornet, followed by other priests, the heads of the tribes, military dignitaries, and numerous Levites playing harps, psalteries, timbrels, cornets, and cymbals. David in a linen ephod, and dancing to the rhythm of the music, led the choir: it thus moved solemnly from the house of Obed-edom, which seems to have been near to Jerusalem, to the capital. It was a day of universal joy and gratitude: peace offerings and burnt offerings were sacrificed on the altars. David blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts; and to increase the flow of popular joy, he distributed meat and drink among them. Psalm xxiv. was sung on the same occasion, during the *entrance*

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of the procession into the gates of the royal castle; the present Psalm may have been sung either *on the road* or in the *interior of the castle*. This was a rare occasion for David, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," (2 Sam. xxiii. 1,) to serve the congregation of God with his gifts of song: so Moses accompanied the setting forward and resting of the ark (Num. x. 35, 36) with pious exclamations. The antiquity of this Psalm and of Psalm xxiv. is apparent from their being quoted in Isaiah xxxiii. 14—16.

At first the ark of the covenant was inseparable from the tabernacle; but from the time it fell into the hands of the Philistines it returned no more to its place, *i. e.* Shiloh, where the tabernacle was at that time, but remained at Kirjath Jearim, in the house of a Levite. David built a tabernacle for it on Mount Zion, while *the* tabernacle with the holy vessels, and especially the altar of burnt offering, remained at Gibeon (according to Josephus about five or six miles from Jerusalem.) In the days of Saul the ark was at Nob, the city of the priests, close to Jerusalem (see ad. Ps. v. 8;) but since, at Saul's cruel bidding, the priests were killed and the city destroyed, (1 Sam. xxii. 18, 19,) it was probably then removed to Gibeon. On comparing together the different passages in the historic books, (2 Sam. vi. 17; 1 Kings iii. 15; 2 Chron. i. 4—6; 1 Chron. xvi.,) it will be seen that both the tabernacle for the ark on Zion and *the* tabernacle of the covenant had their priests, Levites, and porters, and that services were held in both places, though, according to 1 Chron. xvi. (xvii.) 40. (cf. 4, 5.) xxi. (xxii.) 28—30, it would seem chiefly before *the* tabernacle of the covenant. Respecting the question which of the two tabernacles is meant in those Psalms of David which speak of the tabernacle or the house of God and its services, we must presume that the Israelites, and therefore the Psalmist, of that time regarded the two and their services as one *whole*, as did the ancient churches regarding their baptistries; for the tabernacle on Zion represented the Holiest of Holies, and on that account was held in greater reverence.* The reason why David did not remove the tabernacle along with the ark to Zion is, probably, that the many journeys had rendered the already five hundred years' old tabernacle unfit for use, as indeed after the erection of the Temple it was deposited as a holy relic only. As appears more clearly from Psalm xxiv. this Psalm was probably also a *choral* song. Perhaps the precentor or David himself sung the question in v. 2 solo, and the chorus of the Levites

* As an evidence of this view may be adduced 1 Chron. vi. (vii.) 31; (where Luther renders, "When the ark rested," instead of, "After the ark had come to rest.") It is clear that the term "The house of the Lord" includes the place where the ark was, but also the tabernacle, as shows v. 32. Hence v. 39 mentions Asaph as one of the officers of the house who, according to chap. xvi. ministered at the tabernacle. Michaelis adopts the same view.

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gave the reply. The fundamental thought of Psalm xv. is this: *He only, who shows his piety not only in the temple but in his life, is worthy of the prerogative of dwelling in the house of God.* As it is the object of this psalm to show the indissoluble connection between the adoration of God in the temple and its evidences in life, it cannot seem strange that it insists upon our duties towards man. After the positive reply in v. 3, that neither sacrifice nor praise in the temple are well-pleasing to God, if unaccompanied by obedience to his commandments, so the following verses show as it were in a mirror some of the grosser violations of duty towards man, the perpetrators of which are absolutely excluded from communion with God.

1 A PSALM of David.

2 LORD, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
3 HE THAT WALKETH UPRIGHTLY, AND WORKETH RIGHTEOUSNESS,
AND SPEAKETH THE TRUTH FROM HIS HEART.
4 *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue,
Nor doeth evil to his neighbour,
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
5 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned;
But he honoureth them that fear the LORD.
He that sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not.
6 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury,
Nor taketh reward against the innocent.
He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

V. 2. The sojourning and dwelling in the house of God cannot mean a real continuous abode. Familiarity with the house of God, where the pious has spent the most hallowed hours of his life, and most emphatically realized the presence of God, is to the Psalmist the emblem of familiarity with God in general and the blessings flowing from it. Hence to be separated from the tabernacle or the house of God, meant with him to be excluded from the true congregation of Israel, from communion with the Lord and the prerogatives connected therewith. This follows unmistakeably from the the conclusion of this psalm, and also from Psalms xxiii. 6; xxvii. 5; xxxi. 21; xxxvi. 9; lxi. 5; and lxv. 5. How strongly David's heart and its holiest emotions were attached to the house of God, since the ark had been firmly established on Zion, may be seen from his longing for the habitation of God in Zion," as recorded in 2 Sam. xv. 25, (cf. the Hebrew.) Need we surprised

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then if that habitation of God became to him the centre of every mercy? He represents his participation in the adoration of God as a prerogative. This shows that there were some at least in Israel, who deemed the observance of holy rites, the sacrifice and the praise of God not hard duties imposed upon them, but mercies of God. David, however, uses these expressions, because he looked beyond those merely outward acts. He questions God himself, and expects a reply by Divine illumination.

V. 3. David affirms not, that the observance of holy rites, and the offering of sacrifices, are well-pleasing to God: he, on the contrary, regards those services as merciful immunities and Divine privileges, shared by those who offer to God the sacrifice of a pure walk and a sincere heart. A walk of this kind we call a sacrifice, because walking in obedience to God's commandments involves the continuous sacrifice of our own will to that of God. There may exist, indeed, an upright walk, a righteousness and a veracity, which, because not flowing from the remembrance of God and the conscious obedience to his holy commandments, establish no claim whatsoever to the blessings conferred upon the children of God. But it is equally certain, that none can claim the title of a child of God, but he who strives to prove his obedience to the will of God, in word and in deed.

V. 4. David had expressed in one sentence the sum total of what God demands from his genuine followers. The profound delusion of man renders nothing more common than that all of us preserve no small amount of security of conscience, when our duties to man are stated in general terms, *e. g.* that we are to love our neighbour, not to injure but to aid him. Nor do we attain to a proper sense of our guilt, *till the mirror of the Divine commandments be held before every separate recess of the heart.* Hence David rests not satisfied with a general statement of duties, but specifies much prevailing offences, which thousands indulge in, who, with an unruffled conscience, and free from the fear of being regarded as hypocrites, approach the sanctuary of God. He begins with the *violation of character*, which since our usefulness among men depends on it, must be regarded as a real possession, as the wise man has it, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." (Prov. xxii. 1.) He next refers to *every kind of offence against the law of love to our neighbour*, and lastly adverts to the expressions of remarkable passion, as evidenced in *scorn* and *abuse*. Though thousands of Christians may deem obedience to these commands only a poor criterion of piety, it cannot be denied that hundreds and thousands go Sabbath after Sabbath to the sanctuary, professedly for the worship of God, who, were they to test themselves by these, the requirements of God, would be convicted by their own consciences.

V. 5. Here he asserts a demand, of which the mass of those

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who lift their hands to God think probably still less than of the former; viz. that we should form our estimate of human merit *only by the standard of Divine law.* Can any one, save he who regards and loves God as his highest good, esteem *as nothing* the splendour which great riches and distinction, great talents and other amiable qualities, shed on man, if unaccompanied by the fear of God? Are there many to be found who can truthfully affirm that they prize godliness as the most precious and valuable tie which links them to man, so that they infinitely prefer the intercourse of devout, plain, and uneducated saints to that of the talented and highly-gifted ungodly? Or, do you find many Christians, who esteem truthfulness towards our neighbour so valuable a possession, that rather than forego it they will suffer injury and loss of every and any kind? As there is nothing more common than to measure the duty of veracity and faithfulness by the standard of profit and loss, he most assuredly has the law of God deeply engraven in his heart, who at the decisive moment of trial is willing rather to part with property, wife, child, or his own life, than to fail in veracity and faithfulness. We may account for the self-delusion of many on this point, who think better of themselves than they ought, from the fact that what they omit to do from fear of secular laws which punish the violation of promise, they fancy to have omitted from reverence for eternal laws. What a flood of faithless actions would rush upon us were secular law to leave the violation of promise as unpunished as it does that of truth—for how great is the dominion of untruth in the world! Who can deny this, since *in spite of the rigour of secular law,* they are everywhere so universally obtaining?

V. 6. As the original speaks not of *usury* but of *interest,* it might appear that the law had exacted too much; the expression would certainly exclude from the sanctuary of God a countless number of Christians who least expect it. To obviate so hard an opinion, Luther (and E. V.) preferred the term "*usury,*" as denoting "*an extravagant interest.*" Though the law had altogether prohibited the lending on interest, (Exod. xxii. 25; Levit. xxv. 36,) the term "usury" is nevertheless expressive of the spirit of that law. As the manner of money-investment differed in those days from ours, and money used to be lent to the poor and helpless only, the law alludes to the hardheartedness of those who, instead of assisting their neighbour by gifts, even refused to make any advances to him, except on interest. The *taking of reward* refers primarily to *judges,* who prefer their own interests to justice; but applies equally to all who, bribed by temporal considerations, protect an unjust cause. "*He that doeth these things shall never be moved.*" These words plainly indicate, that David speaks not of an external participation in the worship of Israel only. This conclusion reverts to the question in v. 2, viz. "Who is worthy of

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sojourning in the tabernacle of God?" and renders it more evident that the Psalmist meant by dwelling in God's tabernacle something more than a mere participation in external worship. Since this verse, as well as Psalm i. 5, contains a profound anticipation of the most remote future, we must not be surprised that Jewish and Christian interpreters conclude the psalm to refer from the beginning to dwelling in the *everlasting* habitations. (Luke xvi. 9.) This conclusion is correct, because only those shall share in the communion of the kingdom in glory who were no strangers to it on earth, for the path which leads to communion with God both here and there is the same, viz. obedience to the commandments of God, (v. 2.)

PSALM XVI.

A SONG of praise of David, replete with the brightest confidence and joy in God, which stretch beyond the grave.* We cannot determine the occasion on which the minstrel became so powerfully conscious of his communion with God. The immortal hopes which David here expressed in a rapturous hour, could not be realized by him before they met their fulfilment in Christ, who is the first-born from the dead, has conquered death, and taken its sting away. (Col. i. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 20—22. 56, 57; Heb. ii. 14.) Hence the apostles Peter and Paul declare that the Holy Ghost, speaking by the mouth of David, refers in these words to that first-born from the dead who had destroyed the power of death. (Acts ii. 25—31; xiii. 35—37.) We cannot positively infer from verse 1, that this psalm was composed in times of affliction; for a pious man thus commits his ways to God in even the prosperous days of a life which is subject to the alternations of fortune. V. 2 expresses the fundamental thought of the psalm: "*God is the highest possession of the pious.*" Reflecting on this thought, David again sees mankind divided into two classes—those who know that possession, and those from whom it is concealed. He resolves to join the little band of the former, but turns in dismay from the latter, (v. 3, 4.) He is lost in the meditation of the riches and fulness that spring from his communion with God; he confines himself not to the present, but expresses his conviction of future prosperity, (v. 6—8.)

* *Ewald:* "The bright splendours of sublime peace and the cordial intensity of accomplished experience veils the whole. As there is but one great emotion in the poet's soul, so his song is but one gently flowing stream, without storms or difficult transitions, while the secret flame gradually gains in intensity."

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At this stage the Spirit of God leads him to the contemplation of that eternal state of things which Christ having rendered possible became first fulfilled in Him. He perceives that saints go through the grave to heaven, the scene of life, of fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

1 A GOLDEN Psalm (or "a writing") of David.
Preserve me, O God:
For in thee do I put my trust.
2 *O my soul*, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my Lord:
My welfare *is* nought beyond thee;
3 Up! to the saints that *are* in the earth,
And *to* the glorious ones in whom *is* all my delight.
4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that* hasten *after* another;
Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer,
Nor take up their names (of the idols) into my lips.
5 The LORD *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:
Thou maintainest my lot.
6 The lines are (or the lot is) fallen unto me pleasantly:
Yea, I have a goodly heritage.
7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel:
My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.
8 I have set the LORD always before mine eyes:
Because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoiceth:
My flesh also shall dwell securely.
10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol:
Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*
11 Thou wilt show me the path of life:
In thy presence *is* fulness of joy;
At thy right hand *there* are pleasures for evermore.

V. 1. The conviction that God in the most emphatic sense is *his* God, which David realized more profoundly than ever in this hour

* Or, "Mine holy ones to see the grave." Translating in the plural makes no change in the sense; for the promise is fulfilled to the holy ones of God through *the Holy One* of God, who is the first-born from the dead. Translating "to see the grave" (to see corruption) or "decay," makes no material difference. For David could only in a prophetic sense express the hope of not seeing the grave, *i. e.* of continuing in death, (Cf. John xi. 25, 26,) as it could only be fulfilled to him through Christ.

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of sublime and blessed experience, leads him to commit himself and all his destinies for ever unto God. We hear no anxious cry for help, no expression of need to unburden his oppressed heart; but from the happiness and plenitude of the present he looks towards the future. He trusts in the Lord. He trusts in him; and what kind of trust must have filled in that hour *his* soul who was able to utter the sequel of this psalm!

V. 2. There are sometimes epochs in the life of the godly, when moments decide for eternity. David speaks as if in some hour of the past he had for ever made that decision which our Lord demands from his followers, (Matt. vi. 24.) It is indeed not difficult to *say* that all our welfare is nought beyond God, if it be only the expression of *intellectual assent;* but if it mean a decision of the *will*, which once for all spontaneously and unreservedly subjects every and any earthly possessions to the highest of possessions, (*i. e.* to God,) how small their number who can affirm that they have come to such a decision. But we must assume that even in the case of Old Testament saints, like David and Asaph, (Psalm lxxiii. 26,) who thus express themselves, it was only on certain days or hours that their soul could in so clear and firm a manner soar to this decision. And why? Because if that decision were immoveably to abide on the heavens of our soul throughout the period of our earthly existence, it would, like a spiritual sun, pierce all our resolves, and completely absorb sin.

V. 3. Enjoying the delight which the presence of God imparts to his servants, David feels that his faith is not isolated on earth, but that he has gained much from the community of saints, which the Christian language calls "the *Church*," though the Old Testament designates it as "the *people of God*," "the *generation of the righteous*," "the *true Israel of God*." (Cf. ad. iii. 9; xiv. 4, 5.) As Isaiah cries, "Up to the law and to the testimony," (Isaiah viii. 20,) so David calls upon his soul to delight in those only who through their communion with God are in communion with him. The very same parties who are called elsewhere "the *poor* and the *needy*," (Psalm xii. 6; xiv. 6,) are here described as "the excellent," (the glorious ones.) So Peter writes of the disciples of Christ, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." (1 Peter iv. 14.) The addition, "that are in the earth" (*i. e.* the country of the Philistines,) might be explained from supposing him, during the composition of this psalm, as an exile from the land of God, perhaps with the Philistines; but it is preferable to understand here, as in Psalm ci. 8, "the holy land," and that David means to comprise in the term all who are promiscuously scattered within the frontiers of Palestine.

V. 4. Looking at that little band, (Psalm xii. 1,) he cannot forbear mentioning those who choose them *other masters*. (Exodus

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xx. 3; Isaiah xlii. 8.) David may refer to idolaters only, (compare 1 Sam. xxvi. 19, where David said to Saul, "If the children of men have stirred thee up against me, cursed be they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, (for he had to seek refuge with the Philistines,) saying, *Go, serve other gods,*") but the antithesis to the truly pious in the land, as well as other passages in which David describes the wicked as idolaters, (Psalm x. 3; xii. 5; lix. 6, *etc.*) render it probable that he refers to all whose hearts are estranged from God. They may appear happy, and the sight of their prosperity may cause the pious to stagger. But seasons when all the heaven of God fills the heart that loves God, (and David was then blessed with such a season,) render it very evident that those who are deprived of *this* can have no satisfaction in their prosperity, that their welfare is trouble, and their joy intense pain. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." (Psalm xxxii. 10.) To express his thorough detestation of idolaters, he describes them by their most horrible acts—the frightful drink offerings mingled with blood, which they sometimes used to present to their idols. (Zech. ix. 7.) He will not even pollute his lips by *naming* their idols. (Exod. xxiii. 13.)

V. 5, 6. He shows that those alone are well trained in the school of piety who find their fullest satisfaction in the possession of the only God, and desire nought beyond him, through whom all other earthly possessions can only be truly and satisfactorily enjoyed. For as all the enjoyments of creation, if partaken contrary to the limits and purposes which God has assigned, and without any remembrance of the Giver, are bitter and insipid, so God alone renders the enjoyment of creation pleasant. He regards his happiness in God, not as an act or merit of his own, as if he had sought God, but because God always takes the initiative to benefit even those who have not yet sought him, and offers himself to their choice. Hence David deems it a *merciful lot* to have been born in Israel, where God has deposited his testimonies, and met him from his earliest childhood.

V. 7. He thinks not only of outward means of grace, such as those of education, the sanctuary, or the instructions of Samuel and other pious men, but as man is unable to find the living God without the inward guidance of the Holy Spirit in the proper use of the means of grace, he mentions the spiritual counsel and instructions which his reins had imparted to him at night, *i. e.* according to Old Testament usage, his *emotions*, his *feelings*. In the stillness of night, after the bustle and distraction of the day, the monitor from within speaks and points us from time to eternity.

V. 8. He has set the Lord always before his eyes; in other

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words, he has not suffered his senses to turn to the right or to the left. If the mind's eye be thus firmly set upon the Lord, the experience will not fail, that in him are to be found abundant means of securing temporal and eternal happiness. When men turn to the right and to the left to spy the means of comfort, but are unable to find satisfaction in God, the reason is, that the all-sufficiency of God is revealed to those alone who can muster sufficient courage and perseverance, with an undiverted eye, to look at their eternal possession.

V. 9, 10. Thoughts of immortal bliss are sure to arise in the soul of man, when, like David, full of the fear of God, he finds himself ushered into the Holiest of Holies, in communion with God, and attains to the knowledge that God is his all-sufficient good, in whose possession he may for ever prosper. So the Spirit of God shows to the bard the glorious vistas of eternity which lie open to man, since Christ has conquered death.* He is filled with the hope of salvation. Heart and soul, as the spiritual part of man, are glad and rejoice; but the flesh also shall dwell securely.† V. 10 expands this thought. The soul shall not be consigned to Sheol, nor the holy one of God to the grave and to corruption. Not that the holy one of God is to escape death, but as Christ in saying, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die," simply means what is expressed in the preceding verse, "He that believeth in me, *though he were dead, yet shall he live,*" (John xi. 25, 26,) so this passage simply means that Sheol is the pathway, and the grave of corruption the gate, to imperishable glory for the children of God. It is said elsewhere, "But God will redeem *my* soul from the power of Sheol, for he shall receive me." (Psalm xlix. 16.) What David expresses by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost has neither been fulfilled in him nor any other saint, since only by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead were life and immortality brought to light. The Old Testament saints were gathered with the fathers, and perhaps partly translated into a higher sphere of life; but as complete salvation is only to be attained through union with Christ, the indwelling Spirit of whom shall also quicken our newly glorified bodies, (Romans viii. 11,) so the fathers gathered to God had to wait for the advent of Christ, as he said of Abraham himself, that he rejoiced to see his day. (John viii. 56.) Now since the Saviour, the first and only man

† *Ewald:* "The steady glow of the sublimest spiritual exclusion and clarity raises the poet far above the future and its threatenings, and he clearly realizes that such a continuance of the spirit in God banishes all fear, whether of bodily pain or of death, but that the body must finally enjoy rest, where true life is found, since deliverance of the soul from the grave must be possible with Him who desires nothing but life."

† Cf. the antitheses of body and spirit; Isaiah x. 18; Psalm lxxiii. 26; Job xiv. 22. יכב, which Luther translates "will lie," is used Isaiah xxvi. 19, Psalm xciv. 17, "of lying in the *grave.*"

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who rose from the grave as the conqueror of death, in a condition no longer subject to death, thus became exalted at the right hand of the Father, and since, according to his own statement, the members shall share in the experience of the Head, "Where I am, there shall my servant be also," it follows that this prophecy of David shall only be fulfilled in Christ the Head and his members. "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.)

V. 11. He can hardly find words to express the sublimity and loveliness of his final destiny: life and fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore, and that in the presence and at the right hand of God, depicting, as it were, how the rivers of satisfaction and of peace, which even now fill his soul, shall enlarge into a boundless ocean. Similar is the expression of our Lord, that the water which he gives to those who believe in him, shall be in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John iv. 14.)

PSALM XVII.

A PSALM of complaint, composed in the time of Saul's persecution, to which an allusion is found in verse 11, where the plural is used with reference to David and his followers. (Cf. ad. Ps. iv. and xi.) The singular in verse 13 probably refers to Saul.

The Psalmist gathers confidence in prayer from the consciousness of his just cause, (v. 1.) He can trustfully expose himself to the judgment of God in the thing of which they accuse him. The word of God is the guiding-star of his ways, which prevents the slipping of his footsteps, (v. 2—5.) Full of a firm trust, he ventures to lay claim to God's special providence, (v. 6—9.) He states to God the zeal and assurance, the pride and unrelenting sanguinary efforts, of his persecutors unto death, (v. 10—12.) The anxiety of his cry for aid is proportioned to the vividness of this description. They are people, whose sole welfare is confined to the things of this world, (v. 13, 14.) David, however, feels himself conscious of the eternal inheritance which the Lord will grant to them who love him, (v. 15.)

1 A PRAYER of David.

Hear justice, O LORD,
Attend unto my cry.
Give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* not out of feigned lips.

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2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence;
Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal (or "the right.")
3 Thou hast proved mine heart;
Thou has visited *me* in the night;
Thou hast tried me, *and* hast found nothing;
I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress.
4 Concerning the works of men,
By the word of thy lips I have tried the paths of the transgressor.*
5 Hold up my goings in thy paths,
That my footsteps slip not.
6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God:
Incline thine ear unto me, *and hear* my speech.
7 Show thy marvellous loving-kindness,
O thou Saviour of those that put their trust in thee,
From those that rise up *against* thy right hand.
8 Keep me as the apple of the eye,
Hide me under the shadow of thy wings,
9 From the wicked that waste me,
From my deadly enemies, *who* compass me about.
10 They are enclosed in their own fat:
With their mouth they speak proudly.
11 They have now compassed us in our steps:
They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;
12 Like as a lion *that* is greedy of his prey,
And as it were a young lion sitting in secret places.
13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down:
Deliver my soul from the wicked *by* thy sword:
14 From men, by thine hand, O LORD,
From men of the world, *which have* their portion in this life,
And whose belly thou fillest with thy hid *treasure:*
They satisfy their children, and leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes.
15 As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness:
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

V. 1. David first expresses in this prayer the righteousness of his cause. Since there is no greater drawback in our approaches to God than an evil conscience, and no prayer rises to Heaven more confidently than that in a righteous cause, we need not wonder at

* Cf. שמר in Ps. xxxvii. 37, if תם be regarded in the Mascul.

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David's placing his consciousness of wrongful accusation and persecution at the head of this prayer to strengthen his faith. It is quite true, that the ungodly may have to glory in a just cause, but since they refuse to own that God governs the world, their thoughts stop at the judgment-seat of their own consciences; and since they cannot call upon God in faith, they carry their troubles rather with grudging pride than with manly perseverance. The righteousness of his cause stimulates David, praying and weeping, earnestly to refer it to Him who rules the world in righteousness. If a wrongfully accused man were to rest satisfied with the testimony of a good conscience, and were on that account to omit prayer, would he not rob God of his honour, by failing to recommend justice to the Righteous Judge of the world? Aware that a hypocritical mind is with God the most potent destroyer of the power of prayer, David adds that in *his* prayers, the mouth is the interpreter of an innocent heart. For the nature and groundlessness of the accusations which were brought against him, cf. ad. Ps. v. and Ps. vii.

V. 2, 3. He must have a good conscience who calls the Omniscient Judge to his aid. David enjoys one. (Cf. Ps. vii. 4—6.) He points to the silent watches of the night, where the Spirit of God had tried his conscience and sifted his thoughts (to hours of such awful solemnity as described in Job iv. 13, *etc.*) and his heart was clear of the charges which were brought against him. The historical books contain similar testimonies to the purity of David's conscience. (1 Samuel xxiv. 12; xxvi. 18. 23.)

V. 4, 5. David's life corresponds, not only in this instance, but throughout, to what Paul in Rom. xii. 2, requires in Christians. He regards the word of God as the law of his own actions, and the standard to which to refer those of others. It is the characteristic of genuine piety peculiarly becoming to Christians, to conscientiously regard their own and their neighbours' lives *in the light, and to judge of them by the standard, of God's word.* Considerate conduct like this secures that heavenly wisdom which David enjoyed, and which leads us so to know and pursue the paths of God, that our footsteps glide not.

V. 6—8. David trusts that He who guides the starry host in their course, who has made the seven stars and Orion, (Amos v. 8,) forgets not the lone fugitive on the mountains of Judah. He trusts that he keeps him as the apple of the eye, that he may hide himself under the shadow of his wings as the timid chicken under that of the hen, and with childlike confidence prays for the exhibition of the *marvellous* loving-kindness of God. However foolish prayers like these may seem to those who are devoid of the testimony of the love of God in their hearts, they are familiar to us Christians, who know that God has given his only begotten Son to die for us, for we ask in childlike simplicity and trustfulness, "*Shall he not with him give us all things?*"

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V. 9—14. David states that his persecutors are most determinately set upon his destruction; that they try to stop every means of escape; that they are arrogant, secure in their voluptuous prosperity, and on that account insensible to humane feelings; that they indulge in proud boasting, (Cf. Job xv. 27; Psalm lxxiii. 7;) that they are confirmed and sanguinary spoilers, for ever on the scent and pursuit of the fugitives; and (as the history of David amply shows) that they are children of this world, who have not the Lord before them, whose fulness of earthly goods is so great that not only is there enough for their children, but even a portion left for their grandchildren.

V. 15. Exposed to such persecutors, aiming not only at the earthly possessions but the life of David, he might be thought to be in a darkness from which every ray of hope is excluded. But unenvious of the pleasure of those who fatten on such husks, David glories in the prospect of the eternal joys of the world to come. Wondrously enlightened by the Holy Ghost, he speaks with a clearness which seems possible to Christian minds only, of the glories of heaven, where the struggle with sin shall be changed into perfect *righteousness*, faith into *face-to-face vision*, satiation with the divided goods of this life into *satiation with the one perfect good*, which renders everything besides unnecessary. The expression, "to be satisfied with the *likeness* of God," has only one parallel passage (Num. xii. 8:) "With him (Moses) will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the *similitude* (form) of the Lord shall he behold." The likeness, similitude, and form, are to be understood as defined outlines contrasted with an indistinct perception. David probably alludes to the passage in Numbers.

PSALM XVIII.

THE king, who speaks in this psalm, makes himself known in v. 44. 51. It is David who sings this song of praise to his God, after he had delivered him from *all* his enemies, therefore from Absalom and Sheba. It was therefore composed during the last years of his reign, when he was upwards of sixty years old, (he lived to the good old age of seventy.) Though old age is somewhat perceptible, there still remain his noble, heroic mind, his fervent faith and glowing love to God, along with the full consciousness of a long life, rich in experience and vicissitude. The sacred historian set so important a value on this psalm, as embodying the concentrated experience of the great king, that he assigned

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it a place among the historic records, (2 Sam. xxii.) in a form which, owing to verbal tradition and the circulation of some incomplete copies, varies in some respects from that of this psalm.*

The king's deep gratitude, in the retrospect of the guidance of his life, as the fundamental sentiment of this psalm, appears from the accumulation of predicates by which he seeks to exhaust the description of what the Lord has been to him throughout his long life, and to indicate the results of his experience, (v. 2, 3.) He then states the theme of his song; death and destruction have assailed him more than any other, but he has found in a thousand instances that there is a prayer-hearing and answering God, (v. 4—7.) That expression is not sufficiently strong: the signal experiences of his whole life combine into a figure. The earth trembled, the heavens bent, the Lord almost visibly descended in lightnings and tempests, and drew the nigh-drowned David out of great waters, (v. 8—19.) All he has to say is, budlike, compressed into this figure. He now separates the leaves. His life has been the theatre of God's punitive justice, (v. 20—28.) His God gave him strength and glorious victory in war, (v. 29—43.) Enemies at home and abroad had to submit: once deeply humiliated, he is now highly exalted, (v. 44—46.) Feelings excited by an experience of this kind cannot but issue in gratitude and praise to Him who has done such great things.

1 TO the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David, the servant
of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words
of this song in the day *that* the Lord delivered him
from the hand of all his enemies, and from the
hand of Saul: And he said,
2 I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.
3 O LORD, my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high
tower.
4 I called upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised:
And I was delivered from mine enemies.
5 The billows of death compassed me,
And the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

* We have doubtless an older form of this song in the book of Samuel, which is clear from peculiarities of language; but its readings are less satisfactory, and it appears to owe its origin to verbal tradition, (which is also rendered probable from certain approximations to the common dialect of the people, v. 37. 40. 41. 48.) The text in the Psalms may have been taken from one of the king's own manuscripts, which in linguistic respects was afterwards somewhat modified.

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6 The cords of Sheol compassed me about:
The snares of death prevented me.
7 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God:
He heard my voice out of his temple,
And my cry before him came into his ears.
8 Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken,
Because he was wroth.
9 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
And devouring fire out of his mouth:
Coals were kindled by it.
10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down:
And darkness *was* under his feet.
11 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly:
Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.
12 He made darkness his secret place;
His pavilion round about him
Were dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies.
13 Out of the brightness, *that is* before him, passed through his thick clouds
Hail *stones* and coals of fire.
14 The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
And the Highest gave his voice—
Hail *stones* and coals of fire.
15 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
And he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.
16 Then the beds of the sea were seen,
And the foundations of the world were discovered
At thy rebuke, O LORD,
At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
17 He stretched (his arm) from above, he took me,
He drew me out of great waters.
18 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
And from them which hated me:
Which were too strong for me.
19 They prevented me in the day of my calamity:
But the LORD was my stay.
20 He brought me forth also into a large place;
He delivered me, because he delighted in me.
21 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

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22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
23 For all his judgments *were* before me,
And I did not put away his statutes from me.
24 I was also upright before him,
And I kept myself from mine iniquity.*
25 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me
According to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.
26 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful;
With an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright;
27 With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure;
But with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.†
28 For thou wilt save the afflicted people;
But wilt bring down high looks.
29 For thou wilt light my lamp:
The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.
30 For by thee I have run through a troop (or "broken an host:")
And by my God have I leaped over a wall.
31 *As for* God, his way *is* perfect:
The word of the LORD is tried (or "refined-pure:")
He *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him;
32 For who *is* God save the LORD?
Or who *is* a rock save our God?
33 *It is* God that girdeth me with strength,
And maketh my way perfect.
34 He maketh my feet like hinds' *feet*,
And setteth me upon my high places.
35 He teacheth my hands to war,
So that a bow of steel is bent by mine arms.
36 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation:
And thy right hand hath holden me up,
And thy condescension hath made me great.
37 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me,
That my feet (lit: "ancles") did not slip.
38 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them:
Neither did I turn again until they were consumed;

* The expression "from *mine* iniquity" is striking. It might at first sight be regarded as alluding to connate depravity, (Ps. li. 7,) but from comparison with Prov. xx. 9, Ps. xxvi. 1, it seems more natural to explain it "the iniquity to which I feel myself tempted."

† Or, "With the faithless thou wilt show thyself faithless."

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39 I have wounded them that were not able to rise:
They are fallen under my feet.
40 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle:
Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.
41 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies,
That I might destroy them that hate me.
42 They cried, but *there was* none to save *them:*
Even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.
43 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind:
I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.
44 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of my people,
And thou hast made me the head of the heathen:
A people *whom* I have not known serve me.
45 As soon as they heard of me, they did obey me:
The sons of the stranger (or "of the strange land") did flatter me.
46 The sons of the stranger (or "of the strange land") did fade away,
And were afraid out of their close places.
47 The LORD liveth; and blessed be my Rock;
And let the God of my salvation be exalted.
48 *It is* God that avengeth me,
And subdueth the people under me.
49 He delivereth me from mine enemies:
Yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me:
Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.
50 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen,
And sing praises unto thy name.
51 Great deliverance giveth he to his king,
And showeth mercy to his anointed,
To David, and to his seed for evermore.

V. 1. The same inscription, except the words "to the chief musician" and "the servant of the Lord," occurs in the copy of this psalm in the book of Samuel. It consequently preceded this psalm at a very remote period, and the historian omitted those expressions only which were ill-adapted to historical composition. In all probability it was composed by David himself; its solemn poetic expression favours this view: cf. the solemn introductions to the song of Balaam, (Numbers xxiv. 4. 16,) the speeches of the prophets, (Isaiah xiii. 1; Hab. i. 1; Nah. i. 1,) and the psalm in Habakkuk. (Hab. iii. 1.) It is by no means strange that David calls himself "the servant of God," though that appellative occurs

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besides only in Psalm xxxvi. 1. The term "servant of God" is used either of any pious man, anxious to make the commandments of God the rule of his life, or of those who are called to specific services of God. In the former sense David calls himself "the servant of God," (Psalm xix. 12. 14,) in the latter he is so called by others. (Psalm lxxxix. 4. 21.) In the historical books too he calls himself "the servant of God." (2 Sam. vii. 26; xix. 20; xxiii. 1.) The apostles designate themselves in the same manner, as the servants of God. (Titus i. 1; James i. 1.) The expression, "and from the hand of Saul," after mention had been made of his remaining enemies, should be explained by the usage of singling out the chief of a class.

V. 2, 3. The confession of David's cordial love to God in the beginning of the psalm is very touching, for it represents, as it were, the sum total of his experience. The great mass of men, and kings in particular, remember in the retrospect of a life rich in mercies, the *gifts* only. David manifests in simple and hearty expressions his consciousness that a life eventful like his, with all its gifts and mercies, is mainly designed to direct his eyes to the Giver of all good. His God is one and all to him: while others yield to the temptation to seek for other helpers besides God, *he* hardly knows how to find words to express the all-sufficiency of God, and the riches of salvation treasured up in him. There is, however, *one* condition on which alone those riches can be enjoyed. We must *call upon* God in faith if we desire to participate in the fulness of his grace. David, therefore, energetically asserts that help is ready and secure, provided that believing prayer be not wanting. Just as our physical hunger gets satisfied by opening our mouth before the benefactor who would fill it, so our souls; and the mouth of the soul is prayer. (Psalm lxxxi. 11.)

V. 4—7. Let the deliverances of God be ever so great and signal, unbelief will not fail to lessen, nor insensibility to requite them with ingratitude. David, anxious to exculpate himself from ingratitude, and to move unbelievers by his testimony, speaks of the mercies he had received in the strongest expressions which language can furnish. He powerfully contrasts *heaven* and *hell*, *death* and *God*, *himself* in the *depths*, *God* in the *heights*, the billows of destruction and the snares of death, and his sole weapon, unseemly in appearance, but if used in faith all-sufficient—the weapon of prayer. He uses figurative language; but his history shows that the billows of death did really often compass and threaten to devour him. In more than one instance there was but one step between David and the sword of the destroyer. The javelin thrust at him entered the wall above his shoulder, he escaped through a window from his pursuers, and the seam of a mountain separated him from his deadly enemies. (1 Sam. xxiii. 26.)

V. 8—19. David calls the full force of poetical imagery to aid,

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to describe in a becoming manner the marvels of his deliverances. He means to say that they were as manifest as the signs of heaven and earth, as sudden and powerful as the phenomena in the kingdom of nature surprise terrified mortals. *Deliverance* being his theme, he might have taken the figure from the *peaceable* phenomena of the heavens. But since man heeds heaven more in *anger* than in *blessing*, and regards God more when he descends to earth in the *storm* than in the *rainbow*, David describes the blessing condescension of God by the figure of a tempest. In order to thoroughly appreciate the beauty and truthfulness of this figure, we should endeavour to realize the full power of an oriental storm, as it is described in Psalm xxix. (Cf. ad. Psalm xxix.) Solitary lightning precedes the discharge—this is meant by the coals in v. 9: the clouds approach the mountain summits—"the heavens bow," as verse 10 has it; the storm shakes its pinions,* (v. 11;) enwrapped in thick clouds as in a tent, God descends to the earth; hail (not unfrequently attending eastern storms, Psalm lxxviii. 48,) and lightning issue from the black clouds, through the dissolving layers of which is seen the fiery splendour which hides the Lord of nature, (v. 12, 13.) He speaks—and thunder is his voice: he shoots—and flashes of lightning are his arrows. At his rebuke and at the blast of his breath, the earth recedes: the sea foams up and its beds are seen: the land bursts and the foundations of the world are discovered, (v. 14—16.) And lo! an arm of deliverance issues forth from the black clouds and the destructive fire, grasps the wretched one who had cried out from the depths, pulls him forth, and delivers him from all his enemies! Yes, the hand of the Lord has done marvellous things in the life of David. But the *eye of faith* alone could perceive in them all the hand of God. Thousands whose experiences of the delivering hand of God are not less signal than those of David, stop short at the powers of nature, and instead of bending the knee before the all-merciful God, content themselves to express with cold hearts their admiration of the changes of the destiny of man.

V. 20—25. The full energy of David's mind had in the preceding verses depicted in lofty touches the works of God. He now details them. His first sentiment is, that God rules the destinies of man, and rewards *sincerity*, and that human affairs are in the aggregate governed by the laws of punitive justice. It would be folly to infer from this passage, that David intended to assert absolute sinlessness before the Highest. No, the sublime record of the conviction of sin in Israel furnished in the speech of

* The cherub with the countenances of man, the lion, the bull, and the eagle, (combining in itself, as it were, the intelligence, majesty, strength, and life of nature,) was a symbol of the powers of nature. When powerful elements, as in a storm, are serving God, he is said to ride on a cherub.

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Eliphaz to Job, which sends a chill through marrow and bones, is doubtless expressive of David's confession of sin:—

"Now a thing was stealthily brought to me,
"And mine ear received the whispering thereof.
"In thoughts of the visions of the night,
"When deep sleep falleth on men. Fear came upon me and trembling,
"Which made all my bones to shake.
"Then a spirit passed before my face,
"And the hair of my flesh stood up.
"There stood—but I knew not the form thereof—an image before mine eyes:
"I heard a still voice, saying,
"Shall mortal man be just before God?
"And man pure before his Maker?
"Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants,
"And his angels he chargeth with folly."*

What shall we make of the penitential psalms and their mournful complaints of the praises of God, who forgives sin, if David feels himself guiltless before him? This passage is to be understood in the sense in which Paul speaks on the one hand, of *rejoicing in a good conscience*, (2 Cor. i. 12,) of which nobody was to rob *him*, and says on the other, "For I know nothing by myself," (*i. e.* according to Luther, "I am not conscious of anything myself":) "yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." (1 Cor. iv. 4.) John writes in consecutive order, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light—the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.) It is very evident from all this that it is one thing *sincerely to strive to walk according to the commandments of God*, and another to *be free from all sin*. David might have praised the *cleanness of his hands, the caution of his ways, and the constancy of his having had before his eyes the statutes of God*, but it was no doubt accompanied by the acknowledgment of the necessity of the daily forgiveness of his sins. He says, Psalm xix. 12, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults," immediately after the assertion that the commandments of God have instructed him, and that in keeping of them there is great reward, just as if he had been anxious to prevent people thinking too highly of him. Comparing himself with others, he spoke highly of himself—but before God he did on that account no less join the rank and file of the millions of the children of men, whose hope is salvation by *grace*.

V. 26—28. From his own experience, that they who trust in

* Job iv. 12—18.

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God trust well, and that those who do not forsake *him* will never be forsaken by him, David is induced to state the general law, which regulates the conduct of God to man. To terrify hypocrites and the despisers of God, he shrinks not from using the expression that "with the froward (faithless) he will show himself froward." Similar language occurs, Lev. xxvi. 23, 24; Prov. iii. 24. The fact that men treat the severity and terrors of the Divine judgments, as stated in the Scriptures, with utter indifference, seems to render it almost matter of necessity that unusual language should be used to rouse them from their lethargy; of such a nature is the passage before us. The meaning, however, is simply this. God will *forsake and suddenly put to shame* those who forsake him. Although the preparation for such sudden destruction would in general language be termed "faithlessness," we find that even men in daily life absolve themselves from the duty of keeping faith with the faithless. Such a procedure is with God nothing but the *administration of the immutable laws of punitive justice.*

V. 29—43. He proceeds to praise separately the greatness and variety of Divine mercies, especially the aid and support he had received in his martial enterprises. Heroes who have gained victories by personal prowess and bodily strength, which was more the case in ancient than in modern times, are wont to look to themselves, and to ascribe to the arm of flesh the praise which belongs to God. How much then is David to be admired, who in every respect refers both his strength and victories to God. The lamp of v. 29 is, as in Psalm cxxxii. 17, the symbol of joy and blessing; the ways of God in v. 31, mean his gracious promises. When he asks, v. 32, "For who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God?" his meaning is not that there are other gods, but that whatever sources of might, or strength, or happiness men may conceive, their only source, though rarely acknowledged, is the God of Israel. As in ancient times heroes were not only praised for skilfulness in *battle*, but also for skilfulness in *flight;* (Joel ii. 7;) and as David was, during the term of his persecution, compelled to seek his safety more by flight to the mountain heights than by actual combat; he forgets not to praise the Lord for the possession of that skilfulness, (v. 34; Hab. iii. 19.) An uncommon amount of muscular strength was needed to bend the heavy steel bows. Besides this weapon of attack, he names also the shield as his weapon of defence, (v. 35, 36.) The chances of falling are greatest in narrow paths—but God had supported him, (v. 37.) The *successes* of his wars have rendered it evident who did fight *with* him, (v. 38—43.) Expressions like these we read here may sound too martial and sanguinary, and doubts may be entertained whether those who are led by the Spirit of Jesus would use them; but we must not forget to distinguish between a warrior, whom God has instituted into his office, and other Christians.

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Now if *the* office of destroying be instituted as much against those who disturb order from without, and sin against the justice of God, as government and police are against the disturbers of order from within, then the martial courage, which glories in feats of destruction, cannot be wrong, provided they were done in a *righteous* cause, and therefore to the glory of God. The justice and causes of the wars of David are certainly not always stated; but is it likely that one who in private life used to shrink from unjustly shedding one drop of blood—though it were that of his adversaries*—would have wilfully begun unjust wars? The justice of his wars against rebels like Absalom and Sheba is established—yet how lenient was his conduct towards individuals after the victory! (2 Sam. xix.) 2 Sam. x. records the gross contempt of the laws of nations which provoked the second Syrian war, while Psalm ix. and lx. speak of the fierce invasions which led to the subjugation of Edom.

V. 44—46. Not only foreign foes rose up against him, his own people suffered themselves several times to be misled to rebel against their anointed king. But he carried eventually the palm, through the Lord. (Psalm lxxviii. 70, 71.) He had at one time been the poor and unknown shepherd of his father Jesse's flocks; for ten years a fugitive, tossed about like a dry leaf, which the wind is chasing: strangers and his own people had assailed him; yet the once deeply abased David is now highly exalted, and abides at the end of his career, the battle over, the honour and glory of his faithful followers, the terror of all his adversaries. He is become the type of his great descendant, to whom it behoved through many tribulations to enter into His glory. (Luke xxiv. 26.) It is said of the risen Saviour, that he showed unto his disciples from the Scriptures, that "Christ ought to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory;" we cannot doubt that he instructed them from the example of the Old Testament saints, and David in particular, that the royal road to the kingdom is "out of tribulation to glory;" which if trod by the *members*, could not have been withheld from the *Head*.

V. 47, 48. He exultingly owns the Lord as the King of kings, exclaiming, "The Lord liveth," or "Let the Lord live," an address of praise formerly paid to kings. (1 Sam. x. 24.) He had gone into all his battles relying on the Lord's aid, and therefore thanks the Lord for it. Though he praises God for the revenge granted unto him, it is to be remembered that in the Scriptures the term "revenge" has a different sense from that which it bears in general language. It refers not to gratification of selfish passion, but to

* Notice his conduct towards Saul, or that at the murder of his rival Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, (2 Sam. iv. 11; iii. 28, *etc.*) at the murder of Abner, *etc.*

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the exercise of recompense needed for the maintenance of holy laws. So rulers are said to bear the sword of *revenge*. (Rom. xiii. 4.) Is it likely that David should have thanked God for that "revenge" if he had not been sure that he was fighting for a just cause and that at God's bidding?

V. 50, 51. His gratitude causes him to mount higher and higher. With a true missionary spirit he holds it but a little thing to offer gratitude to the Lord in the congregations of Israel:—he would like as a missionary to go to all the nations and to loudly praise and magnify the God of Israel. How copious must the stream of gratitude flow in the heart of one, who, deeming house and country too confined for his songs of praise, cannot feel at ease till they sound throughout all the world, and all the nations of the earth form his audience! David's praise and gratitude are not confined to the past and the present. We are reminded of what Nathan the prophet had told him: "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom; he shall build an house for my name, *and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.*" (2 Sam. vii. 12, 13.) He praises beforehand the blessings promised to his seed. This prophecy has an ultimate reference to that seed of David, who in a higher sense is to build the house of the Lord, and to wear the crown, when all earthly crowns shall have ceased, and Israel after the flesh shall have become Israel after the Spirit. (Gal. vi. 16; iv. 26.) His praise therefore, though perhaps not thoroughly realized by David himself, points ultimately to Christ and his kingdom, to "the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, who hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof." (Rev. v. 5.)

PSALM XIX.

A SONG of praise, celebrating the proclamation of God in nature and in the law. Since v. 8 proceeds without any marked transition to the praise of the law, and since the remaining portion of the psalm is not equal to the sublimity of the former, it might be held that the two portions were originally two separate songs; but this view falls at once to the ground, since the first would have no conclusion, and the second no beginning. It is evident from Psalm xxix. 10, 11, and xciii. 4, 5, that the transition from nature to religion, or the connexion of the praise of the revelation of God in nature with that in the law, was by no means unusual with the Psalmists. Sudden and unconnected transitions of this kind are of frequent occurrence; *e.g.* Psalm xxxvi. 6, a passage worthy of our

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special regard, because the Psalmist, engaged in describing the blessings and protection enjoyed by the godly in spite of the opposition of the ungodly, suddenly adverts to the traces of divine mercy in *nature:* a transition which is certainly very striking. The first portion of this psalm refers to the *speech*, the *proclamation*, or *sermon* of God in the heavens, which would greatly facilitate the transition to the *word* of God in the law: or we may more correctly say that the praise of God's voice in nature is the introduction to the praise of the law, which was the main object of the Psalmist. Nor does the poetic sublimity of expression which distinguishes the former from the latter portion, militate against the unity of both, because sublimity is the distinguishing characteristic of the psalms of nature.

The Psalmist, deeply impressed with the blessings of piety and of the divine law, looks at nature and the heavens, and feels that an attentive observer may listen to the majestic evidence of the glory of God. The heavens preach a never ceasing sermon on God, which goes as far as the heavens themselves, (v. 2—5.) The sun is the chief preacher, from whose rays there is nothing concealed, (v. 5—7.) Dwelling on the object which so deeply affects him, David proceeds to the praise of the law, which so powerfully testifies to the self-same God: he declares it intrinsically good and sure, and on that account refreshing and enlightening to man, (v. 8, 9.) Its commandments are pure and true, and therefore immutable and righteous, and the sweetest possession of man, (v. 10, 11.) The Psalmist speaks from his own experience that they have admonished him, but as if he had said too much, he forth with prays for the forgiveness of his secret and unconscious sins. He is not even sure to be free from presumptuous sins, (v. 12. 14.) He concludes his prayer in a peaceful and confident frame of mind, sure that God is his strength and his Redeemer, (v. 15.)

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

2 The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament showeth his handiwork.
3 Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge.
4 It is not a speech or a language,
The voice whereof is not heard.
5 The sound thereof is gone out through all the earth,
And the words thereof to the end of the world,
Where he hath set a tabernacle for the sun,
6 Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoiceth as a hero to run the race.

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7 His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven,
And his circuit unto the ends of it:
And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.
8 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, refreshing the s
The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making
simple.
9 The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing th
The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlighten
eyes.
10 The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever:
The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* rig
altogether.
11 More precious *are they* than gold, yea, than muc
gold:
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
12 Moreover by them is thy servant warned:
And in keeping of them *there is* great reward.
13 (But) who can mark *his* errors?
Cleanse thou me from unknown *faults*.
14 Keep back thy servant also from intentional *si*
Let them not have dominion over me:
Then shall I be upright,
And I shall be innocent from great transgressio
15 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditatio
heart,
Be acceptable in thy sight,
O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

V. 2. Lost in marvel he contemplates the expanse of he which it is said, (Job xxxvii. 18,) "Canst thou like him out the sky, firm as a molten looking-glass?" Who keeps t and spheres in their liquid space? Who directs the course

* The word זְדוֹן,זֵד,זוּד, always means "*intentional sins*," (De xvii. 18; Exod. xxi. 14,) in contradistinction to שְׁגִגָה used v. 13, *conscious sins*," (Lev. iv. 2; v. 15.) חָשַׂךְ is used when God restra from sin, (Gen. xx. 6; 1 Sam. xxv. 39.) The masculine plural, less frequent than the feminine plural, designates abstract terms. xvi. 6.) From these details זֵדִים should be translated "presumpt the sense of wilful transgression. If we render with a great many, proud presumptuous men," the best explanation is that of Abe "from the society and seduction of the wicked." This view, h would introduce an extraneous thought into the text, and not co the connection.

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thousands and hundreds of thousands, side by side, above and below one another, so that none of them faileth, comes too early or too late? Though all preachers on earth should grow silent, and every human mouth cease from publishing the glory of God, the heavens above will never cease to declare and proclaim his majesty and glory.

V. 3. They are for ever preaching; for like an unbroken chain their message is delivered from day to day, and from night to night. At the silence of one herald, another takes up his speech. One day like the other discloses the same spectacles of his glory, and one night like the other the same wonders of his majesty.

V. 4. Though nature be *hushed* and *quiet* when the sun in his glory has reached the zenith on the azure sky—though the world keep her *silent* festival when the stars shine brightest at night—yet, says the Psalmist, they *speak;* aye, holy silence itself is a speech, provided there be the ear to hear it.

V. 5. Their sound is coextensive with the heavens, their speech coextensive with the earth. Paul declares on this ground the heathen is inexcusable; for if their hearts were but pure, the splendours of the glorious majesty above would become reflected in their hearts, and be the witnesses of their Creator. Nature gives us the information we ask her for, but no more: but the heathen would not ask for a holy and almighty God. The poet speaks here of the noblest witness whom God has set in the heavens. Though the infinite hosts of the stars fill our minds with more ineffable and illimitable anticipations than the sun, yet is the impression of his majesty more definite, and on that account more overwhelming. He stands like the ambassador and representative of God in the heavens. We find that man, whose heart is so strongly attached to the creature, has worshipped this work of God rather than himself. David speaks of the sun as a man who, worn out with the fatigues of the day, returns to his home. Thus when night sets in, he daily retires for rest to his habitation at the seam of the sky. (Hab. iii. 11, in the original.)

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loftier by far, and that he is worthier by far of our love and adoration: yea, they would be *ashamed* to speak with equal warmth of the love of God. Others again, while admiring God in nature, are unable to recognize him in the Scriptures. The heavens and the earth do certainly set forth the omnipotence and wisdom, the love and majesty of God; but the Bible only sets forth his *holiness*. Equal susceptibilities for the *holy*, the *beautiful*, and the *sublime*, are needed, if the omnipotence, wisdom, love, and majesty, of the laws of the moral government, are to affect man as do those of the physical, and if the great moral phenomena of the Bible are to produce impressions, as do the phenomena of the heavens and the earth. The holy, we grant, may be called the beautiful, as it consists in the harmony of the soul in itself and with God; we grant also, that a *holy* soul is sure to be a *beautiful* soul. But many, though transported with the beauty of nature, or delighted with a human work of art, have no susceptibility for the secret development of a soul in harmony with itself and God. The Psalmist is not less affected by the moral beauty of the Divine law, and the soul yielding itself to it, than by the grandeur and beauty of nature. He recognizes on that account, in the speech of the heavens and of the earth, the same voice of God which speaks in the law. Hence the rapid transition, which cannot but remain unintelligible to a great many.

V. 8, 9. The same God of omnipotence and wisdom, mercy and majesty, has revealed himself in his *law*. His law is *true* and *spotless* in itself, *sure* and *convincing* to man: on that account it *renders happy* the wretched, and *makes wise* the foolish. This thought is differently expressed in verses 8, 9, to stamp it more thoroughly upon our hearts. He who has experienced this, will recognize in the law the omnipotence of God reflected in nature, and consider the statutes of the law as *eternal* as are the *laws of nature:* he will admire the *wisdom* by virtue of which the moral commandments are so marvellously adapted to the wants of the human heart: he will get refreshed by the *love* which, though it rigorously insists upon the observance of its statutes, aims only at our own happiness: he will worship before the Divine *Majesty*, the expression of which is equally sublime in the events of the moral government, as in the phenomena of nature.

V. 10, 11. The commandments of the fear of the Lord are *immutable* because of their *purity*, and *righteous* because of their *truth*. If man receives them into his will, he will find them more *precious* than any earthly riches, and *sweeter* than the sweetest food. Just as medicine does not cure, nor food nourish, until it has been masticated, and entered into our constitution, so a merely outward gaze and admiration cannot yield an idea of that preciousness and sweetness: they are not tasted *until the commandments of God have been received into our will.*

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V. 12, 13. The Psalmist, not satisfied with outwardly admiring and adoring the commandments of God, adopted them as the law of his life. He, therefore, calls himself the *servant of God*, and can speak of the enjoyment of the great reward of holiness already here on earth. For if the reception of the will of God into ours confers upon us the privilege of revealing God *in* and *through* us, and of becoming his instruments and representatives on earth, then a holy life is a participation of the eternal life of God. Are we, therefore, not justified in speaking of the *great* reward of godliness? But David, as if afraid to have said too much, forthwith remembers secret faults which need Divine forgiveness. The grace of God so influences the regenerate Christian, that conscious and intentional sins do indeed vanish, and only unconscious and thoughtless sins remain. So David thinks first of transgressions of this light nature. But as the regenerate, while the tendency to evil which he derives from Adam is not yet wholly extinct, can never become sufficiently secure to answer for himself in evil hours, when temptation from without and desire from within meet, so David will not surrender himself to a false security, but seeks in God the strength and grace which are to preserve him from *intentional* sin.

V. 14. Concerning intentional sins he prays, "Let them not have dominion over me," thinking that a condition of that kind could only be brought about by some sudden invasion or act of violence done to our better man. In the event of the preserving care of God not failing him, he hopes to reach the position, that transgression whether great or small shall find no place in his life.

V. 15. These expressions indicate peace in God. Our prayers, because they are hardly at any time the pure effusions of the Holy Spirit, require, as well as our good works, the *petition of forgiveness*. His petition, however, that the words of his mouth might be well-pleasing in the sight of God, makes us feel that he was by no means devoid of the assurance that they were so. "My God and my Redeemer" is the last word in which his soul reposes.

PSALM XX.

A PSALM of supplication, occasioned by the king's going out to war. We infer from verse 8 that it belongs to the time of David, for the Jews had no chariots before the Syrian war, (Judges i. 19; iv. 3,) and from the cavalry of Solomon being specially named, they seem to have had no cavalry either: the Syrian army, on the

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other hand, had many chariots. (2 Sam. viii. 4; x. 18.) The king being spoken of in the third person is no objection to David's being the author, (Psalm xlviii. 51;) on occasions of this kind he doubtless showed himself as the Psalmist of Israel, and composed the hymns which were sung by the Levites. (2 Sam. xxiii. 1.)

The people supplicate in holy simplicity, in the songs of the Levites (v. 2—6,) the grace of God and his assistance for their king going out to war, and confidingly pray for the accomplishment of his designs. Strengthened by the prayers of the people, the king himself expresses his confidence, and with his mind's eye beholds his enemies already laid low, (v. 7—9.) Then follows another supplication of the people, (v. 10.) From the allusion in verse 4, v. 2—6 may be regarded as sung during *sacrifice*, because sacrifices used to be offered at the beginning of a warfare, and the sacrifices themselves accompanied by music and song.

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

The Levites sing:

2 The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble;
The name of the God of Jacob defend thee.
3 Send thee help from the sanctuary,
And strengthen thee out of Zion.
4 Remember all thy offerings,
And accept thy burnt sacrifice. Selah.
5 Grant thee according to thine own heart,
And fulfil all thy counsel.
6 We will rejoice in thy salvation,
And in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners:*
The LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

David sings:

7 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed;
He will hear him from his holy heaven,
With the saving strength of his right hand.
8 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses:
But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.
9 They are brought down and fallen:
But we are risen, and stand upright.

The Levites sing:

10 Save, LORD, the king;
He (the LORD) will hear us when we call.

* Or, "We lift up the name of our God."

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V. 2, 3. We here notice that the king and his people go to war as if they went in the service of God, and on that account implore his aid. (Cf. ad. Ps. xviii. 38—43.) As wars are subjected to alternations and times of need, the aid of Heaven is implored for seasons when earthly resources may be exhausted. As the people whose weakness found it so difficult a task to look up to the invisible God, were favoured with a visible sanctuary on Zion, they pray for help from Zion. They call upon the God of *Jacob*, that is, the God of his descendants, to whom was confirmed the mercy which guided their ancestor. The *name* (Ps. lii. 11; liv. 3; Isaiah xxx. 27; Prov. xviii. 10,) of the God of Jacob, because the name is expressive of his character, as if the Psalmist had said, "The God of Jacob help us, according to all the power and glory which we seek to express in the name which we give to him."

V. 4. Just as Christians rejoice in comfort that their prayers will be heard through the Redeemer, who has made them acceptable to God, so the ancient Israelites regarded sacrifice as the Divinely instituted means for rendering their prayers well-pleasing to God. The Psalmist prays therefore that his prayers may be acceptable to God.

V. 5, 6. As it is impossible for a pious man to expect that the promptings of covetousness or ambition should be heard by a holy God, so we may regard the present petition as an evidence of the good conscience of David in this warfare, which we cannot but think was undertaken in a righteous cause: he therefore confidently solicits the protection of God, since without such a good conscience the prayers would be devoid of heartiness and trust.* The Psalmist moreover is so sure that the prayers of his people will be answered, that he lets the people beforehand rejoice at his safety, and proclaims beforehand the fulfilment of his petitions. The true relation of a king and his subjects may be noticed here. The people rejoice at the safety of their king, as if it were their own: for the life of a people should be in their king, and the life and safety of a king in his people.

V. 7—9. The king derives much hope from the knowledge that he is not isolated, but represented by all his people. If a human parent will listen to the united cry of his children, how much more will God hear, when in a just cause a whole people and their king pray to him! We need not be astonished that the heathen nations with whom David went to war put their trust in chariots and in horses, when we remember that even among Christians many are prone to forget God, in proportion to their possession of

* If this psalm was sung when David went during the second Syrian war against *the Syrians* and *the Ammonites*, then history records the cause of this war as most just. (2 Samuel x.)

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earthly resources. The heavenly mind of David, however, makes itself heard, "But we will remember the name of the Lord our God," declaring that that name is to him and his people a more potent defence than any weapon. We may presume that a general like David neglected none of the earthly resources which the Lord had placed within his reach. How admirable his demeanour, that he none the less perseveres to have his eye fixed on the aid of the invisible God! He knows himself so strong in that aid, that his prophetic vision beholds his enemies as already fallen and crushed, and his people standing upright.

V. 10. Edified by these words, the people finally repeat with a more courageous heart their call for help.

PSALM XXI.

A PSALM of thanksgiving, probably sung after the victory prayed for in Psalm xx. (Cf. v. 3, with Ps. xx. 5.) The following circumstance renders it probable that the composition of this psalm took place after the victory over the allied hosts of the Syrians and Ammonites. The king of the Ammonites wore, according to 2 Sam. xii. 30, a crown a talent of gold in weight (about fifty-six pounds,) which David put on his head after his defeat. That passage runs as if David had been without a royal diadem before. Should this be so, this psalm may have been composed after the complete victory over the Syrians and the Ammonites, and after the complete restoration of peace at some triumphal solemnity.

The king is spoken of in the third person from v. 2—8; but we assume that David expresses his gratitude himself in language at once sublime and simple. V. 9—14 address the king; and while the former portion of the psalm is expressive of gratitude for the past, the latter contains two predictions, which, after their great victories, are well becoming the people.

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

The King sings:

2 The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD;
And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!
3 Thou hast given him his heart's desire,
And hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.

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4 For thou overwhelmest him with the blessings of goodness:
Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.
5 He asked life of thee, *and* thou gavest *it* him,
Even length of days, for ever and ever.
6 His glory *is* great in thy salvation:
Honour and majesty (ornament) hast thou laid upon him.
7 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever:
Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.
8 For the king trusteth in the LORD,
And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.

The Levites sing:

9 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies:
Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.
10 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thy anger:
The LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath,
And the fire shall devour them.
11 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth,
And their seed from among the children of men.
12 For they intended evil against thee:
They imagined a mischievous device,
Which they were not able *to perform.*
13 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back:
When thou shalt make ready *thine arrows* upon thy strings against the face of them.
14 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength!
We will sing and praise thy power.

V. 2, 3. There are many who, when reduced to want, or embarking in some great enterprise and distrustful of their own power, call to God for aid, but after having been successful, forget him whose assistance they had invoked; and though they do not always ascribe the honour to themselves, rest wholly satisfied with their *successes*, and go no further. David, after having been crowned with victory, looks first to the Lord, and gives the honour to him. Yea, he regards every new victory as a new seal set to the mercy of God and a confirmation of his divine favour. It is this which hallows his joy.

V. 4—8. If David had before been without the symbol of his royal dignity, viz. the diadem, he was the more justified in praising the goodness of God, which had now transferred it from the

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head of an enemy to his own. The words of the king in verse 5 are striking, because the term "for ever and ever" differs from "for ever," which generally denotes a long period. It is not improbable that David alluded to the word of prophecy, "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever," (2 Sam. vii. 16;) and refers to the life he was to live in his descendants, as he indeed lives and reigns for ever in that descendant of his, who sways the sceptre over the spiritual Israel. The Psalmist further declares before the people, that however great and glorious he may appear, he glories, not in his own deeds, but in the assistance and adornment which the Lord had conferred upon him: and acknowledges his Lord and Master as the only source of blessing and joy. This he still more distinctly affirms in verse 8, and commits the future to the mercy of God.

V. 9—13. The king had committed his future to the mercy of the Lord. The people in their turn do now express bright hopes and great predictions for his future. The prosperity of a kingdom no less requires blessings and peace at home than defence against enemies from without. They hopefully foretell to David that his enemies shall not escape out of his hand, that he shall make them as wood in a fiery oven, that not only his own martial chivalry shall sustain him, but that the wrath of God shall come to his aid, and as often our most dangerous enemies spring up from the revenge of the descendants of our adversaries, to render the victory complete their descendants also shall not escape vengeance. The heathen disbelieving the divine appointment of David and the divine call *of his* people, had arrogantly framed their designs without remembering the Lord: therefore their devices came to nought, for the Lord fights for his king and for his people.

V. 14. Once more they attest that the strength and glory of David's kingdom is the *Lord's*—a thought which—since *He* is mighty—will crush his adversaries, but elevate his faithful followers to gratitude and praise.

PSALM XXII.

A PLAINTIVE song, proceeding as it were from the lowest abyss of tribulation, such as David might have uttered in an hour of intense peril, an instance of which occurs in 1 Sam. xxiii. 26. The deep distress which characterizes the description of his misery, (v. 2—11,) is penetrated by a *petition* in verse 12, but again absorbed by the affecting complaint of extreme peril down to v. 19. Then his cry for help gets stronger in v. 20. 22, and the song rises to a wonder-

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ful hope. The procrastination of his deliverance shall become a festival of joy to all the afflicted in Israel, (v. 23—27.) Infinite in space, and infinite in time, shall the message of that deliverance reach all the nations of the earth down to the most remote futurity; rich and poor shall alike be satisfied and worship *Him*, (v. 28—32.)

This psalm is wonderful indeed: such a fear in the lowest abyss, and so triumphant a prediction—a prediction of successes which David could never have said of himself as a man. As in other psalms, (Cf. ad. Ps. xvi.) so here, the Spirit of God had raised the Psalmist to so lofty a consciousness, in virtue of which he affirmed what in quite a subordinate sense only met its fulfilment in himself, though in the fullest sense in his great Descendant. He had been in situations where he heard the rivers of death sweep past him, and had presentiments of death, and might therefore as a man hope that *his* deliverance would be the consolation of many a pious Israelite—but his expressions go far beyond what can apply to his circumstances. A higher spirit must have come upon him, at whose suggestions he expressed descriptions and hopes far beyond his human sphere, which though possibly containing a certain subordinate truth in his own case, met their full realization in his antitype, the Messiah. Our Lord himself no doubt regarded this psalm in this light, when at his approaching death he uttered its opening words; and the assumption of many commentators has not a little probability, that the plaintive cry at the beginning, and the triumphant exclamation at the close of the psalm, were simultaneously before the soul of the Redeemer.

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, concerning
the hind, pursued at dawn.
2 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
Why art thou so far from helping me, *and from* the
words of my roaring?
3 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not;
And in the night season, and am not silent.
4 But thou art the Holy One,
That art enthroned upon the praises of Israel.
5 Our fathers trusted in thee:
They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
6 They cried unto thee, and were delivered:
They trusted in thee, and were not confounded.
7 But I *am* a worm, and no man:
A reproach of men, and despised of the people.
8 All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,

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9 "He trusted on the LORD, let him save him:
Let him deliver him if he delight in him."
10 But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb:
Thou didst keep me in safety *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.
11 I was cast upon thee from my birth:
Thou *art* my God from my mother's womb.
12 Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near;
For there is no helper.
13 Many bulls have compassed me:
Strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.
14 They gaped upon me *with* their mouths,
As ravening and roaring lions.
15 I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are sundered:
My heart is like wax;
It is melted in the midst of my bowels.
16 My strength is dried up like a potsherd;
And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;
And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
17 For dogs have compassed me:
The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:
They pierced my hands and my feet.*
18 I may tell all my bones:
They look *and* stare upon me.
19 They part my garments among them,
And cast lots for my vesture.
20 But be not thou far from me, O LORD;
O my strength, haste thee to help me.
21 Deliver my soul from the sword;
My lonely one† from the power of the dog.
22 Save me from the lion's mouth:
For thou hast heard me from the horns of the buffaloes.
23 I will declare thy name unto my brethren:
In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

* Some translate, "*As a lion they have surrounded my hands and feet.*" But is it correct to say that lions surround our hands and feet? They rather rush at man. Aben Ezra indeed observes, "We resist with the hands, and flee with the feet." But who would resist a lion with his hands? The expression is inapplicable, even if we understand men as those who surround him. Who would say of his persecutors, "They have surrounded my *hands* and my *feet*"?

† Or, "My soul," "My life."

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24 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him;
All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him;
And fear him, all ye the seed of Israel,
25 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Neither hath he hid his face from him;
But when he cried unto him, he heard.
26 My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation:
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
27 The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied:
They shall praise the LORD that seek him:
Your heart shall live for ever.
28 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD:
And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
29 For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S:
And he *is* the governor among the nations.
30 And *they that be* rich upon earth shall eat and worship:
All they that lie in the dust shall bow before him:
And they that live in distress.
31 A seed shall serve him;
They shall proclaim the Lord from generation to generation.
32 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness
Unto a people that shall be born, for he hath done well.

V. 1. The expression, "The hind of the dawn," which in the original forms the title of this psalm, indicates in the same manner as the words, "The mute dove among enemies," (Psalm lvi.) the *subject* of his burden. He compares himself to a hind pursued at early dawn, and probably points to the time of day at which the persecution took place.

V. 2. His representing himself as a man forsaken of God, seems to argue so low a stage of despair, as if not even a spark of faith had remained in him; but as he hastens to pour out his grief before God, and twice exclaims, "*My* God," we see that in spite of despair he has not made shipwreck of his faith. He complains here that God has forsaken him, in the same sense in which he says elsewhere, "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalm x. 1.) Because God is almighty and merciful, we are prone to think him afar off when we cannot discern the traces of his omnipotence and mercy. Though unbelief and obstinacy will in the heat of temptation ask "*Why?*"

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we must in the case of David regard it as expressive of his astonishment that he should have reached such a climax of wretchedness: this remark applies also to Psalm x. 1, and Isaiah lxiii. 17.

V. 3. This verse shows even more clearly than the last words of v. 2, that the reference is not to transient, but continuous misery. At the same time it is evident that David, though called upon in his deep and continuous anxieties to experience the greatest trials which can possibly befall a pious man, and though his prayers met a shut door with God, was none of those faint-hearted people who give over at the first unsuccessful attempt, and go in search of other doors. He continued to stand before that one door, and though it refused to open for weeks and months together, he was sure in his faith that he was before the *right* door, and that there was *none other* which could supply its place.

V. 4—6. He goes on to state that which had kept up his courage, viz. the myriads of praises in the congregation of the righteous, of which the Holy One of Israel has prepared for himself a throne—the long list of the fathers, who bore the uniform testimony, that "*they who trust in the Lord shall never be confounded.*" As if he had said, "I must not forget that I am a member of the great body of the congregation, and on that account the sharer of the same mercy as all others before me; and the God to whom all the fathers cried is the same God in whose hands is the government of the world to this day." Now, though contemplations like these became on the one hand to the warrior of faith a rock for edification, they proved on the other a *stone of stumbling for falling*. "Why does He not help *me*, as he has helped *them?* Why do *my* prayers fall back into my bosom, hurled back like impotent arrows? Is it because I am an *excommunicated* member, no longer counted in his congregation?" Such are the temptations of faith by which the adversary intensifies the temptations of soul and body, when the pious are committed to the furnace of trials.

V. 7—9. Attacking *him*, they attacked Him in whom he had placed his hope. Those who can sympathize in such situations with a pious man, know that that is the most lacerating kind of contempt. Because such an one loves God more than himself, he would rather encounter floods of derision *himself*, than that one drop should fall on the name of his *God*. The contempt was of a two-fold kind: it was either expressive of the daring unbelief that there is no ear in heaven which hears praying mortals, or it conveyed the no less fearful accusation that *David* at least was of the race of *hypocrites*, who have no right to apply the promises of God to themselves. In this latter sense the same mockery was heard before the cross of Golgotha. (Matt. xxvii. 43.) But *their mockery* is turned into glory, "*He trusted in God.*" This is the glory of Christ and of David; the inscription of their lives, written by the finger of God. The shaking of the head and the opened mouth

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denote mocking delight. (2 Kings xix. 21; Job xvi. 4; Matt. xxvii. 39.)

V. 10, 11. David repeats in *faith*, what they say in *unbelief:* their *mockery* he counts his *glory*. Yes, the Lord takes pleasure in him. God was his Father, when he could not take care of himself: he experienced him as his God all the days of his life. We see the infant translated from the mother's womb to the light of day—the mother's breast provides it with nourishment, while yet unable to partake of any other; and while we think that the tender plants might perish a hundred times, the guardian angels of God watch over them. All these things produce no grateful impressions on us, simply because we daily experience them. But David is impressed by them, and in childlike manner states first those proofs of Divine protection which he shares with the rest of mankind, and then mentions (v. 11) that he has always found God in his chequered life as *his* God, *i. e.* as his Father.

V. 12. Not until now bursts a cry for help from his oppression of anxiety. His desperate condition itself becomes the foundation into which he casts his anchor.

V. 13, 14. His enemies in their blind rage are more like beasts than men—like bulls inflamed to fury—like lions opening their mouths when they roar for prey.

V. 15, 16. Having spoken of outward difficulties, he now depicts the effects of anxiety upon his soul. The less we anticipate to meet so uncommon an emotion, through sufferings, in a heroic mind like David's, the more correct is our conclusion as to their uncommonness and enormity. But from their nature they cannot with all their greatness have been more than the shadow of the sufferings of the Son of God on the cross. In proportion to the superiority of Him, whom David in his spirit called his Lord, (Matt. xxii. 45,) over David, are the sufferings of Christ greater than those of David. As poured-out water will dissolve on the ground, so David says that his strength is dissolved—that his bones, the supports of the human frame, are sundered—and that trouble has melted his heart. The sap of his life is dried up like a burnt-out potsherd: his tongue is languid from the anxiety of his soul: yea, he lies in the dust among the dead.

V. 17—19. He had before compared his persecutors to furious bulls and blood-thirsty lions; he now describes them as greedy dogs, run astray, which in the East like wild beasts attack man. They have pierced his hand and feet and as it were pinned him. This expression, which to David could only be a figure, and that a striking one,* carries him far beyond his own circumstances. The spirit of prophecy prompts him to point to the event which was to be fulfilled on Golgotha. The flesh and bodily strength are so

* The Psalmist may have retained the figure of "greedy dogs tearing his hands and feet;" then the connexion explains the expression.

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entirely gone that he can count his bones: a condition so wretched would, under ordinary circumstances, elicit pity even from the heart of enemies—but blind revenge has made his enemies so savage that its contemplation yields them delight. They behold the lifeless corpse lie at their feet, and cast lots for his vesture. We expect to hear the troubled Psalmist sing of shameless robbery rather than of their raffling for his vesture, and recognise therefore in this expression another typical reference to the future. (John xix. 24.)

V. 20—22. He is unable to find any strength in himself nor help on earth: for days and nights he has cried in vain: the confidence he displayed hitherto, while troubles were increasing and not decreasing, had given new stings to their mockery, a new edge to their scorn; yet he continues to pray. He calls *the Lord his strength*, to show that his hopes are not on earth but in heaven. The mouth of the lion, the horns of the wild buffalo, and the sword, must be taken as figures of present danger of death.

V. 23—25. It is incontrovertibly clear from this passage, that temptation never so completely broke David that it deprived him of the consciousness of strength to resist. Lo! grief and complaint vanish suddenly. He resolves to sing songs of praises—not only in his intercourse with friends, but in the public assemblies, to exhort his brethren, yea, *all* his brethren in faith, to imitate his example, and to blend their praises with his. For since all the children of God form one spiritual body, is therefore the victory of one not the glory of the rest? So Paul desires the Corinthians that "they also helping together by prayer for him, that for the gift bestowed upon him *by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on his behalf.*" (2 Cor. i. 11.) A double truth is apparent in this deliverance: men befriend the high, God most loves to befriend the humble (low;) and prayer is the instrument which will force the bars of the gate of heaven.

V. 26, 27. David uses a peculiar figure to denote the blessings which the marvellous dealings of God with him were to confer upon the congregation. It was customary in times of great danger to make vows of thank-offerings, which were prepared into meals, where the poor in particular were permitted to join. So David represents the payment of his gratitude as a feast, where all the afflicted shall be filled, for which the pious shall praise the Lord and rejoice for evermore. It is evident from the nature of the case that no real feast is meant; but this gets yet more apparent from v. 30, which says that the rich and the poor on earth shall alike get filled at that feast. The feast and the thank-offering are rather figurative expressions of the grateful proclamation of the merciful works of God which is to take place in the congregation. In many other places occurs the performance of vows as denoting prayers of gratitude. (Cf. ad. Psalm l. 14. 23.) When it is said that the

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needy shall be filled by the message of the mercies of God as at a great feast, we recognise in the expression the description of the abundant fulness of nourishment which from that message shall accrue to the *inner* man; while the typical nature of the words of David stamps the expression with its proper significance. So Isaiah foretold, in reference to the days of redemption, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." (Isaiah xxv. 6.)

V. 28—32. The boundaries of Israel are too narrow for his hope: the message shall be heard to the ends of the world, and from the ends of the world shall men be invited to the feast; the worship of the true God shall be the fruit. Who will gainsay, he continues in v. 29, that, though the heathen seem to have no master (even now the sceptre of the Lord is invisibly swayed over them: "He ruleth in the midst of his enemies.") He will in his own good time cause them to come, that there shall be one fold and one Shepherd? The *poor* were almost exclusively gathered at the feasts of thank-offerings; but the rich as well shall come to *this* feast; for who among us is not *poor* in the possession of the goods which it yields? As this message is unlimited in space, so it shall be in time, and go from generation to generation. The Psalmist finally praises the *righteousness* of God, but be it remembered that his righteousness includes *love*. (Cf. ad. Psalm v. 9.) The upshot of all is, that the wonderful glory after extreme sufferings shall become the exhibition for the display of every Divine attribute—an exhibition of mercy, which shall inform the Church, down to the most distant future of the fulness of the love of God, and of the riches of his grace.

PSALM XXIII.

A PSALM of praise, which exhibits the purest effusion of a soul reconciled to God, and expresses the one thought of *happiness in and with God*. The blessed hour in which the bard composed this psalm knew neither the law with its terrors nor sin with its temptations. Christians use this beautiful psalm as the expression of the most peculiar emotions which their consciousness of salvation in Christ has excited in them. This song yields not only the presentiments of the blessings of the kingdom of grace, but since the Church militant does at no time experience those blessings in so undimmed a light, may we not say that it yields the presentiment of eternal happiness, which, in Rev. vii. 17, is described in these

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words: "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes"?

1 A PSALM of David.

2 The LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want anything.
3 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
4 He refresheth my soul:
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
5 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou *art* with me:
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
6 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou anointest my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.
7 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

V. 2. The spell of childlike simplicity shed over this psalm seems to refer it, like Psalm viii., to the period when David was feeding his father's sheep. The transient allusion to enemies in verse 6, presents the only objection to this view. But those words need not be regarded as descriptive of present enemies. The first portion of his stay at the court of Saul seems the most likely, because then the recollections of his shepherd-life were still fresh. We find that man's proneness to forget God is proportioned to the magnitude of the blessings he confers on him. How delightful to see David lift his soul to God, not only in the hour of affliction, but also in the enjoyment of perfect peace. Can we conceive of anything more impotent and helpless than a flock of sheep? Again, who pursues his path in more perfect security and peace, than the flock which feeds under the staff of a faithful shepherd? Thus *helpless* and *unconcerned* the children of God pass through life. They say to themselves, He will think for me: he will care for me: he will fight for me. The aged Israel calls the God of Abraham and Isaac his "Shepherd." (Gen. xlviii. 15, in the original.) Isaiah prophesies of the period of redemption, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and

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carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isaiah xl. 11.) The Psalmist sings, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." (Ps. lxxx. 2.) The Prophets declare that "God will visit his people, and feed them as their shepherd, by the Messiah, the Son of David." (Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Jer. xxxi. 10.) And when He came, he said of himself: "*I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*" (John x. 14. 27, 28.) "I shall not want anything," sings the bard, expressing thereby that God is his all-sufficient good: possessing him, he has everything. His words show that while he says this, his soul is like a clear sheet of water or a cloudless sky. Our anxiety, care, and restlessness arise, because God does not suffice us.

V. 2, 3. He describes the blessings of the shepherd's crook, first in figurative then in plain language—Lovely provision is made to satisfy the hungry and thirsty of the flock. The lamb is furnished with a green pasture, *i. e.* fresh and nourishing food, and may repose beside the still (Isaiah viii. 6) waters, where its thirst gets quenched and refreshing breezes blow. He now expresses his meaning in plain language—*Refreshment of his soul by Divine instruction, and the treading of paths in which going astray or falling are impossible.* This David knows, that such grace is not enjoyed by him because of any personal merit, but *the Lord does it all for his name's sake.* (Ps. xxxi. 4; xxv. 11, *etc.*) That name he himself declared to be "*merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.*" (Exod. xxxiv. 6.) He will never prove faithless to that name: and as the name of God indicates his Being, if he is said to do anything for his name's sake, the meaning is that his merciful intentions flow from the ocean of mercy of his Being.

V. 4, 5. The path of the flock is alternately along sunny mountain sides and through dark and narrow rock-bound valleys; but the lambs fear no mishap, knowing that a mighty shepherd's staff presides over their helplessness. So David yields not to the dreamy illusion, that the godly are free from affliction on earth, but is well aware that their bread is often steeped in tears. It is a beautiful trait of David's piety, that his happiness is not confined to bright sunshine, but that he is not afraid in the dark vale, and for ever finds a source of joy in the Shepherd's staff which presides over him. He drops the figure in verse 5, and denotes his enemies as the evil in the dark valley. A well-spread table is within their sight, at which he is seated with anointed head (Luke vii. 46) and an overflowing cup. He shows that a mind reposing in God, while sure of *his* mercy, may feast on the peace of God, undisturbed by

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external calamity. Such a sentiment would be natural in a Christian, who as a child of the New Covenant may cheerfully exclaim, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?" (Rom. viii. 33, 34;) but confidence like that expressed in the Psalm before us is truly marvellous in an Old Testament saint.

V. 6. The assurance of reconciliation is accompanied by the assurance that no events in time can shorten, and no limits of time circumscribe, the love and mercy of God. So the mighty faith of David grasps the promises of God, steadfastly and calmly contemplating the alternations of uncertain life, and firmly convinced of the immoveability of the Divine counsel. The Lord will never forsake his people. The concluding words are very striking, "*I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*"* It is evident that David refers not to a continuous residence in the tent of the ark or the tabernacle: he rather considers the house of God as the symbol of communion with God and the congregation of the righteous. (Ps. lii. 10; cf. ad. Ps. xv. 1.) These words therefore furnish an evidence that the blessings previously mentioned designate not only the external blessings of man, but rather the enjoyments which the Lord provides in the sanctuary for his people, the riches of which David describes elsewhere in overwhelming fulness, "How precious is thy loving-kindness, O God! that the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. *They get drunk with the riches of thine house, thou makest them drink of the river of thy pleasures.* For with thee is the fountain of light: in thy light do we see light." (Ps. xxxvi. 8—10.)

PSALM XXIV.

A SONG of praise, sung on the same occasion as Psalm xv. when the procession of the Levites had come near to the ancient castle of Zion. (Cf. Introduction to Psalm xv.) The praise of having won many victories, which are ascribed to the ark, clearly intimates the days of David, for after it attained to its *rest* on Moriah, (Ps. cxxxii. 14; cf. ad. Ps. xlvii.) it was no more taken into the camp.

The bard, anxious to express the solemnity of the moment, declares that the sanctuary of Him is entering who has founded the world and all that dwell therein. This gives rise to the ques-

* "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." (Ps. xxvii. 4.)

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tion, Who is worthy to step into the vicinity of such a sanctuary? (v. 1—3.) The generation of the true worshippers of God are known by the purity of their hearts and hands (cf. Ps. xv.) and not by their sacrifices. The hoary, grey castle gates, through which many a wordly king of the Jebusites had entered, are too low to receive the King of Heaven; they are therefore called upon to raise their heads. As yet they knew him not in his dignity. A mighty echo returns the question, "Who is the King of Glory?" It is the Lord strong and mighty. How many victories have been won by his ark? The gates must not deny admission to Him. But the question re-echoes once more, as if to furnish the occasion for a louder and more confident declaration of glory, (v. 7—10.)

1 A PRAYER of David.

First Choir.

THE earth *is* the LORD'S and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.
2 For he hath founded it above the seas,
And established it above the floods.
3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
Or who shall stand in his holy place?

Second Choir.

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.
5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
6 This *is* the generation of them that seek him,
That seek his face, O Jacob. Selah.

First Choir.

7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in.

Second Choir.

8 Who *is* this King of glory?

First Choir.

9 The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Even lift *them* up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in.

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Second Choir.

10 Who is this King of glory?

First Choir.

The LORD of hosts, he *is* the King of glory. Selah.

V. 1, 2. The name of God would not so easily glide over our lips, nor would our minds evince so great an aptitude to wander in our prayers, if we were able to concentrate at the time being the sum total which that name includes. To impress the people with the dignity attaching to the services before the sanctuary of Israel, David deems it necessary to begin with an intimation of the infinite majesty of Him before whom they were henceforth to appear on the holy mount. Though he declares the small band of Israel as his peculiar possession—though to Jacob only he showeth his word, and to Israel his statutes and judgments, (Ps. cxlvii. 19,) nevertheless the earth, its fulness, and its inhabitants, are his too. The more numerous his subjects, the greater should be the gratitude of Israel for his election of grace. It is said in v. 2, that he hath founded the earth *above* the sea and above the floods; this is explained by the fact that the land rises above the waters, and the Psalmist intends to show his marvel at the waters surrounding and not swallowing up the earth.*

V. 3—6. This description of the true worshippers of God corresponds to that of Psalm xv. It is not the scrupulous payment of external offerings, nor regular attendance in the sanctuary, nor the punctilious observance of sacred rites. But the participation in the act of adoration in the holy place, and the privilege of being permitted to bring offerings to God, and made to depend on the purity of heart and hands of the worshippers, which is still further defined by a refraining from every species of *vanity* and *deceitful speech*. We Christians ought to regard our services, not so much as duties, but as sacred privileges. He says, "This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek his face," intimating that those who pretend to care for God and to seek him, but strive not for purity of heart and hands, must be regarded as hypocrites. In calling *that* generation *par excellence Jacob*, David makes a distinction similar to that made by Paul in Rom. ix. 6, between a Jacob after the flesh and a Jacob after the Spirit.† Paul indeed

* Ps. xxxiii. 7; Job xxvi. 10. Other commentators hold that the Psalmist considers the earth as swimming in the waters, and alludes to Gen. vii. 11, forgetting that the fountains of the great deep mentioned there are in the *womb* of the earth; on the other hand it is said, Job xxvi. 7, that the earth hangeth upon *nothing*.

† Cf. *Israel* Ps. lxxiii. 1; xxv. 22; Isa. xlix. 3, *etc.* Israel is the more solemn name for Jacob. The whole people is called Jacob, Ps. xlvii. 5.

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informs us that the promises of God became verified to this Spiritual Israel with the advent of Messiah, though the large mass of the people rejected him.

V. 7—10. The procession is now approaching the castle gates of the seat of Jebusite royalty, which David had conquered. Its doors are called *everlasting*,* *i. e.* ancient doors. History describes the Jebusites as a peculiarly powerful and firmly established nation of Palestine: that castle therefore was probably for a long time the seat of Jebusite royalty. (Josh. x. 1. 23.) The doors in the east moreover are much lower than ours.† And is so uncommon a king to hold his entrance without the gates lifting up their heads, *i. e.* the raising of their capitals? As if hurt at so uncommon a demand, the gates are made to inquire who that unknown king of glory might be—who had never before entered through them. Thrice they receive with increased confidence the response, that He is the Lord of Hosts, he who won the victories which are still in the memory of all.

PSALM XXV.

A SONG of complaint, either composed during the latter portion of David's residence at the court of Saul, or during the years of his exile.

Starting with the presence of his enemies the Psalmist seeks comfort from the consciousness that he supplicates the assistance of God as an intimate friend and not as a stranger, (v. 1—3.) But he is aware of his need to pray for further guidance from above for his advancement in *righteousness*, and to ask for the forgiveness of many transgressions, (v. 4—11.) He knows and confesses that the fear of the Lord leads to an ever-increasing illumination, and to the enjoyment of every good, (v. 12—14.) He builds his hope on these convictions, and prays earnestly for Divine aid against his enemies, (v. 15—21.)

1 A PSALM of David.
Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, I trust in thee:
Let me not be ashamed.
Let not mine enemies triumph over me.

* This word refers not to the *future*, as 1 Kings viii. 13, but to the *past*, as Isa. lviii. 12; Hab. iii. 6; Ez. xxxvi. 2.
† *Faber.* Observations on the East, vol. i. p. 94, *etc.*

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3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed:
Let them be ashamed that wickedly despise thee.
4 Show me thy ways, O LORD;
Teach me thy paths.
5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me:
For thou *art* the God of my salvation;
On thee do I wait daily.
6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy loving-kindnesses.
For they are from everlasting.
7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:
According to thy mercy remember thou me
For thy goodness' sake, O LORD.
8 Good and upright *is* the LORD:
Therefore will he teach sinners in the way.
9 The meek will he guide in judgment:
And the meek will he teach his way.
10 All the paths of the LORD *are* mercy and truth
Unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
11 For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity;
For it *is* great.
12 What man *is* he that feareth the LORD?
Him shall he teach in the best way.
13 His soul shall lodge in goodness;
And his seed shall possess the land.
14 The secret of the LORD *is* with them that fear him;
And he will show them his covenant.*
15 Mine eyes *are* ever towards the LORD:
For he shall pluck my feet out of the net.
16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me;
For I *am* desolate and afflicted.
17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged:
O bring thou me out of my distresses.
18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain;
And forgive all my sins.
19 Consider mine enemies how many they be.
And they hate me with cruel hatred.
20 O keep my soul and deliver me:
Let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.

* Or, "The Lord holds intimate converse with them that fear him; he makes a covenant with them to instruct them."

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21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me;
For I wait on thee.
22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles,*

V. 1—3. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul," is his cry, forgetting earthly treasures, men, and everything beside God, as it ought to be when we mean to pray aright. His enemies mock and oppress him; but knowing that in their worst appearance they are merely chastising rods in the hands of God, he prays for deliverance by the *hand of God*. How appeasing the thought that when men show enmity towards us they are simply the chastising rods in the hands of God, which must cease to strike as soon as his end is accomplished. David finds it difficult to bear the mocking triumph of his enemies, because, as has been already more than once observed, he cannot put up with the denial of the truthfulness of the promises of God. He calls his enemies, in verse 3, "wicked despisers of God," *i. e.* such as do not keep his laws. He hopes, because it is the eternal law of God, that none who wait on him shall ever be ashamed. We must assume that he refers to *ultimate* confusion, for we could not well deny that the pious have occasionally to succumb.

V. 4—7. He numbers himself with those *who wait upon the Lord* and *trust in him*. But he is afraid to say too much: he shrinks from describing himself as too righteous, and prays therefore that God, the only source of his salvation, might graciously direct him by his Spirit and lead him into his paths. He disavows all claim and merit, and appeals to the mercies and goodness of God, as the only sources of man's salvation. By adding "*which are from everlasting*," he means to say that were God at any time to cease revealing himself to man by those glorious attributes, it would be tantamount to his "*proving untrue to himself*." He certainly remembers *sin* as the wall of partition which may step between man and the mercy of God: especially the transgressions of his youth, the period of our lives when the solemnity of the Divine law is not sufficiently realized by man. But shall the source from which he derives every other good, refuse to yield the *forgiveness of his sins?*

V. 8—10. As coals feed the fire, so the remembrance of the truths of our faith should keep alive the flame of our prayers. He derives comfort from his conviction that God, being good and upright, cannot but lead into the paths of holiness those who really desire to be instructed in them. The proud despise such instruction; David knows himself humbled; the humble and meek are, however, the very parties whom God will guide and teach. These truths therefore increase his comfort, which is still more enhanced

* Cf. Introduction to Psalm xiv.

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by his conviction that the paths of the Lord are fraught with the riches of mercy and truth, to all who are earnestly bent upon obeying his law. He beautifully expresses the great truth, set forth by our Lord, John vii. 17, that they are neither able nor entitled to form a judgment of the ways and commandments of God, who only apprehend them with their understanding: they must be *obeyed*, if their power is to be felt.

V. 11—14. Prayer for forgiveness interrupts his meditation, and very properly so: for no sooner do we realise the blessings of a holy and pure life, than we get conscious of our many failings. He is unable to present a more powerful shield to his threatening conscience than the name of God's own choosing, which most thoroughly sets forth his glorious character. (Cf. ad. Psalm xxiii. 3.) Having appeased the voice of conscience, he continued to delight his soul with the contemplation of the blessed consequences of a godly life. He is sure that the fear of the Lord is the best way: the soul of the pious shall pitch her tent and lodge in goodness as in a fruitful land—shall reach her home and possess it for ever. The thought of the last expression requires some further elucidation. Moses made the promise "to possess the land" (to inherit the earth,) in a literal sense to his people, (Deut. iv. 22; xl. 5; xxxvi. 6. 18,) but since his days it has been used to denote perfect peace, as is apparent from Prov. ii. 21. (Cf. ad. Psalm xxxvii. 8, 9. The Psalmist further declares that God will hold intimate communion (Cf. Prov. iii. 32; and Job xxiv. 4, in the Hebrew,) with them that fear him, instruct them by his Spirit, and establish them in the truth.

V. 15, 16. Conscious of his sincerity, he yields once more to the hope of deliverance, pleading that all other helpers had forsaken him, and that the troubles of his heart are very great, at the same time disclaiming personal *merit*.

V. 19—22. At the close of his prayer he resumes the petition and complaint of the beginning, still enjoying the same comforts, viz. the testimony of a good conscience towards his enemies, and a heart assured that all help must come from above. Compare also the remarks on Psalm xiv. 7.

PSALM XXVI.

A SONG of complaint belonging to the time of Saul's persecution, in which David expresses the innocence of his life and his love of the sanctuary, and prays that on that account his destiny may not be like that of the ungodly, when they are visited with the judgments of God.

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1 A PSALM of David.

Judge me, O LORD;
For I have walked in mine integrity:
I trust also in the LORD, *therefore* I shall not slide.
2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;
Try my reins and my heart.
3 For thy loving-kindness *is* before mine eyes:
And I have walked in thy truth.
4 I have not sat with vain persons,
Neither have I communed with dissemblers.
5 I have hated the congregation of evil doers;
And have not sat with the wicked.
6 I will wash mine hands in innocency:
So will I compass thine altar, O LORD:
7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving,
And tell of all thy wondrous works,
8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house,
And the place where thine honour dwelleth.
9 Gather not my soul with sinners,
Nor my life with bloody men:
10 In whose hands *is* mischief,
And their right hand is full of bribes.
11 But as for me I will walk in mine innocence:
Redeem me, and be merciful unto me.
12 My foot standeth in an even place:
In the congregations will I bless the LORD.

V. 1. David received no justice at the hands of men, for the king himself had become a servant of injustice. The blessing that a Judge in heaven presides over all the judges on earth, cannot be sufficiently prized till we get reduced to circumstances like these. We have noticed his innocence at the persecutions of Saul, (Ps. vii. 4, *etc.*) He clings to hope though years had passed away without having produced any visible change. He enters into the secret of the presence of God with his "I trust in the Lord." Who can help admiring his unflagging faith? Who feels not that these words are more than mere hollow phrases?

V. 2—8. His own conscience yields so powerful a testimony against the untrue accusations circulated by his enemies, that he knows his heart and mind free from any stain in that respect. His marvellous adherence to integrity in his conduct towards Saul was the result of his *piety*. He evinced that piety in refusing to associate with evil doers; he no doubt increased thereby the num-

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ber of his adversaries, and fanned the flame of their passion. He further showed it by paying to God the outward marks of adoration, by his offerings on the altar, his songs of praise, and his preference of the house of the Lord to every other dwelling. (Psalm xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4; xxxvi. 9. Cf. on the *house of the Lord* ad. Psalm xxiii. 6.) If "the honour of God" in this place be regarded to be the glory of God as manifested above the ark of the covenant, (Ezek. ix. 3; x. 4; 1 Sam. iv. 21; Ps. lxxviii. 61,) it is to be borne in mind that it cannot apply to Zion, for it was *not* removed there until David's accession to the throne; again, the ark was in Saul's time at Kirjath-jearim, but to judge from 1 Chron. xiii. 3, no service seems to have been held there in the days of Saul. For these reasons we had better understand the "honour" or "glory" of God, of his majesty which is especially experienced and found, when all the people pray to their God, as David says, Psalm lxiii. 3, "Thus have I seen thee in the sanctuary—seen thy power and thy glory."

V. 9—12. Assured that God does not cease even on earth to make a marked distinction between the godly and the ungodly, but being then apparently exposed to the superiority of the foe, (for the sword was hourly suspended above his head,) he prays God to make a difference between his destiny and that of the wicked. (Ps. xxvii. 3, 4.) He describes the wicked as full of mischief and ready to take bribes. The last clause seems not applicable to his then persecutors: by limiting it to corrupt judges exclusively we narrow the expression: it is rather a general description of dishonesty and corrupt disposition.* On the other hand, we are entitled to the supposition that Saul by no means failed to reward his abettors for accusing and persecuting David. (1 Sam. xxii. 7, 8.) David once more declares his resolution to walk after the commandments of God, and since God likes nothing more than being praised by sincere hearts, he vows not only to celebrate his praise in the closet, but to publish it in the great congregations of the godly.

PSALM XXVII.

A PSALM of comfort, replete with strong faith and poetical beauty. David confidently asserts that though numerous hosts should rise against him, or his nearest and dearest friends forsake him, he is

* Prov. xv. 27. "He that is *greedy of gain* troubleth his own house: but he that hateth gifts shall live." Sir. xx. 31. "Gifts and offerings blind the wise." Sir. xl. 12. "All gifts and ill-gotten goods shall vanish, but honesty shall abide for ever."

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sure to ultimately triumph through the Lord. From special attention being had to verses 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, and their comparison with several psalms which were composed during the persecution of Absalom, (Ps. lxiii. 42, 43,) it seems very probable that this psalm falls into the same period.

When all the people had risen against David, he fervently and joyfully clings to his God, (v. 1—3.) He regards the communion with God, which he had enjoyed in the sanctuary, as his highest good, and looks at the sanctuary as a sure asylum, where he yet hopes to sing his praises, (v. 4—6.) After this lofty flight of his soul, complaint gets audible but only for a moment—it immediately re-assumes the expression of confidence, (v. 7—10.) The injustice and violence of his enemies raise his courage to pray. What would his condition be without his trust in God? He therefore encourages himself in the fervour and assurance of faith, (v. 11—14.)

1 A PSALM of David.

The LORD *is* my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?
2 Though the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes,
should come upon me to eat up my flesh,
They shall stumble and fall.
3 Though an host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear:
Though war should rise against me,
In this *will* I *be* confident.
4 One *thing* have I desired of the LORD,
That will I seek after;
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days
of my life;
To behold the beauty* of the LORD,
And to look at his temple.
5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me:
He shall set me upon a rock.
6 And now shall mine head be lifted above mine enemies
round about me:
Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy;
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

* In the Hebrew, "loveliness."

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7 Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice:
Have mercy also upon me and answer me.
8 My heart reminds thee of thy word: "Seek ye my face."
Thy face, LORD, will I seek.
9 Hide not thy face far from me;
Put not thy servant away in anger:
Thou hast been my help; leave me not,
Neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
10 When my father and my mother forsake me,
Then the LORD will take me up.
11 Teach me thy way, O LORD,
And lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.
12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies:
For false witnesses are risen up against me,
And such as breathe out cruelty.
13 *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness
of the LORD
14 In the land of the living.* Wait on the LORD:
Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart:
Wait, I say, on the LORD.

V. 1, 2. Here, as in Ps. xlix. 6; lxxiii. 1, we see a heart, which having struggled some time with the temptation of despair mounts triumphantly, fearlessly braving every storm, conscious that while God is for us, we need not fear if the whole world be against us. This triumph of faith is impossible if we lack the assurance that God is reconciled to us: hence it arises in the soul of Old Testament saints as a transient ray of light, which is soon succeeded by former darkness. Only Paul was able all his life long to enjoy the assurance which he expresses in Rom. viii. 31, *etc.* "My light, my salvation, the strength of my life," is "my All in All," where I find concentrated everything in the search of which others have to pursue many roads.

V. 3, 4. Convinced that the combined strength of mortals is nothing compared unto God, David neither fears hostile armies nor an entire people risen in rebellion. He uses similar language in Ps. iii. 6, 7, "I laid me down and slept, I awaked for the Lord sustained me: I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about." On his flight before Absalom, he left behind him his palace, his residence, his crown, his wife and children: he thinks of none of these, but it is the highest object of his desire "to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life," so when he was in the desert (Ps. lxiii.) his

* Cf. Gen. l. 15, in the Hebrew.

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soul thirsted for God and his sanctuary more than for anything else. 2 Sam. xv. 25, shows how all his desires concentrated in the hope of his seeing again the sanctuary on Zion. The holiest experiences of his life were connected with the sanctuary, he therefore desired to be never separated from it. It is there where he realized the delight of holy communion with God, which he describes Ps. xxxvi. 8—10; lxxxiv. 11. "To behold the beauty of the Lord" in connection with "looking at his temple" is best explained by Luther, who renders, "to behold the beautiful services (worship) of the Lord." Psalm xcii. 2, describes the same delights. "It is a precious thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High." These passages show that many of the pious in Israel regarded their worship not as an outward formality, performed in obedience to the law, but that they poured their whole soul into it and derived spiritual strength from it. David goes beyond the delights of worship: he longs "to look at the sanctuary." This meaning* is not "outward admiration," nor the solemn sentiments only to which the holy place might give rise, but the contemplation of the symbolical meaning of the holy ritual: for just as our weak eyes are only able to look at the sun when he is reflected in the mirror of the waters, so spiritual truths were accessible to the ancients only when they were reflected in the mirror or the symbol.† Another psalm which falls into this period depicts in almost the same words the longing of the exiled king for the sanctuary and its services, (Ps. lxiii. 2, 3.)

V. 5, 6. The tabernacle presented an asylum to the pursued. (1 Kings ii. 29.) He therefore names the pavilion of God as his place of refuge in all the tempests of his life: the same thought is expressed in Psalm lxi. 5. (Cf. Ps. xxxi. 21.) David having spoken of the temple in verse 4, names in verses 5, 6, the *tabernacle*, which shows, as was observed ad. Psalm v. 8, that the tabernacle used to be called the *temple*.‡ Another figure describes the manner of his deliverance from danger. "He shall set me upon a rock." In that manner he had during his former years of suffering often escaped from his persecutors. While the children of the

* The Hebrew means rather "mental looking at a thing" than physical.

† "A former race, more affected by sensuous impressions, must have possessed a greater sense (adaptation) for symbolical language: it may be said that entire nature showed her physiognomy to them." O. Mueller, Prolegom. of Mythology, p. 258. Cf. Bœhr's Symbolism of the Mosaic Ritual, 2 vols. 1837 and 1839.

‡ Commentators who dispute the Davidic origin of this psalm, have not satisfactorily explained David's speaking *here* of the *Tabernacle*. Krahmer says, "The temple which was built in the form of the tabernacle." Others (Gesenius) think that Ezek. xli. 1, is as much "tent" as "temple." Cf. however Bœtticher's Specimens of the Old Testament Interpretations, p. 237.

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world celebrate only secular triumphs after such marvellous preservations and deliverances, and praise and magnify their good fortune, David thinks beforehand of the praises he intends to sing to his *Lord*, and he does it with an evident foretaste of holy delight.

V. 7—10. He had struggled through much anxiety to the confidence here expressed; but as the waves of the heart undulate, and light and shade alternate in trouble, fear breaks forth once more, though it is raised and supported by divine consolation. With the key of a divine promise as ancient as Moses, (Deut. iv. 29; cf. 2 Chron. xv. 2; Psalm cv. 4,) he unlocks the door that leads to God, and takes God at his own word, whereby he teaches us how the word of God should, like the echo in mountainous regions, find a thousandfold echo in our hearts, to raise our confidence by its repeated calls. Having laid hold of God in his *word*, he continues to pray for the experience of its *power:* for by the unveiling of the countenance of God he understands the experience of his favour. He prays in the right manner, disowning all other help save that of God. We may have earthly resources, and apply to them, but we are to do it *in* God, not *without* him. David is so sure of divine favour, that though all earthly supports however near and dear should fail, he knows that God will always remain the same. Parental hearts are susceptible of the tenderest love for their offspring, but God has promised far greater: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? *yea, they may forget*, yet will not I forget thee." (Isa. xlix. 15.) God is David's first and last resource: he presents indeed a powerful contrast to an unbelieving world, to whom God, if haply they think of him, is only the stop-gap of earthly helpers. But the Lord is a *jealous* God, who will not give his glory to another. (Exod. xxxiv. 14.)

V. 11, 12. It is touching to notice his prayers for Divine assistance that transgression may not deprive him of the glory which until then even his enemies were obliged to leave him; viz. the glory of a good conscience. Now that the father went to war against his son, the king against his own people, there were many occasions for stumbling, either from weakness or severity. Certain calumnies of his enemies were not wanting: 2 Sam. xv. 3, 4, state the rumours detrimental to the character of David which had been circulated by Absalom, and 2 Sam. xvi. 8, the unjust railings which Shimei uttered in the interest of Absalom.

V. 13, 14. We may supply the thought of David to the words, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living," from Psalm cxix. 92, where he says, "Unless the law had been my delights, *I should then have perished in mine affliction.*" If he had not trusted in the Lord, he would indeed have been undone; for in *his circumstances* there was no

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hope for him with men. Hoping in the Lord he encourages himself, that though his help be delayed, he will not look out for any other help. There is no more dignified species of worship to be found, than that of exemplifying our faith in the omnipotence and wisdom of God, by humble and joyous perseverance under the greatest difficulties.

PSALM XXVIII.

A SONG of complaint, belonging to the time of Absalom's persecution, as appears from verses 8, 9, where David prays for himself the king, and for his loyal subjects. (Cf. Ps. lxiii. 12.)

In some mournful hour of that time he prays God not to suffer the innocent to be destroyed with the guilty, (v. 1—5.) His faith then mounts suddenly to prophetic certainty: he thanks the Lord for having answered his prayers, and expresses his conviction that the blessing of God will rest on the king and the people, (v. 6—9.)

1 A PSALM of David.
Unto thee will I cry, O LORD, my rock; be not silent to me:
Lest, *if* thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.
2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee.
When I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle.
3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity,
Which speak peace to their neighbours,
But mischief *is* in their hearts.
4 Give them according to their deeds,
And according to the wickedness of their endeavours:
Give them after the work of their hands;
Render to them their desert.
5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD,
Nor the operation of his hands,
He shall destroy them, and not build them up.
6 Blessed *be* the LORD,
Because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

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7 The LORD *is* my strength and my shield;
My heart trusted in him, and I am helped:
Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth;
And with my song will I praise him.
8 The LORD *is* their strength (*i. e.* the faithful followers of the king,)
And he *is* the saving strength of his anointed.
9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance:
Feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

V. 1. David's refuge is with God—this evidences his faith and good conscience. For however much suffering dims the life of all, there are but few who make the Lord their refuge. Most men either inwardly consume their grief in obstinate silence, or give vent to it in idle complaints, or conquered by despair succumb to misfortune. The reason is just this, that most men shrink from approaching God through infidelity or accusing consciences, and know not the blessedness of confiding in his omnipotence and mercy. David indicates the greatness of his danger by saying, that he resembles those who have no hope on earth.

V. 2. His supplication is fervent—the waters are come unto his soul. He has not indulged in lukewarm speech before God, but *cried* and lifted up his hands to the Holiest of Holies: viz. toward the seat of the ark, the visible sanctuary which God had provided for Israel, because they found it so difficult to raise their hearts to heaven.

V. 3—5. Far from believing that God makes no difference between the righteous and the ungodly and treats both indiscriminately alike, he forms the hope of his consolation from the character of God. In verse 5, the root of the evil works of the wicked is shown, who will not regard the doings of the Lord—those evidences of his power, wisdom, and righteousness, which in every place he has exhibited to the attentive observer.

V. 6, 7. *Hearty* petitions imply the assurance that they will be answered. Hence no surprise need be felt if assurance often furnishes the Amen. So here in the case of David. If his assurance was of the right kind, we have to regard his Amen not as a human response, but like assurance itself, the effect of the Holy Spirit. Being able like a *hero* to look to the Lord and to trust in his strength, his help is come.

V. 8, 9. "The Lord is *their* strength." This refers to his faithful followers, who had not joined the multitude in siding with Absalom. He refers to these in Psalm lxiii. 12, "But the king shall rejoice in God; *every one that sweareth by him shall glory*," as in Psalm iii. he concludes with praying in verse 9 for these—the chosen people, the people and inheritance of God.

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PSALM XXIX.

A GLORIOUS psalm of praise sung during a tempest, the majesty of which shakes universal nature, so much so that the greatness of the power of the Lord is felt by all in heaven and on earth. This Lord is the God of his people, who blesses them with strength and peace.

To rightly appreciate the feelings of the bard, one ought to realise an oriental storm, especially in the mountainous regions of Palestine, which, accompanied by the terrific echoes of the encircling mountains, by torrents of rain like waterspouts, often scatters terror on man and beast, destruction on cities and fields.*

1 A PSALM of David.
Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty,†
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name;
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.
3 The voice of the LORD *is* upon the waters:
The God of glory thundereth:
The LORD *is* above great waters.
4 The voice of the LORD *is* powerful;
The voice of the LORD *is* full of majesty.
5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars;
Yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.
6 He maketh them also to skip like calves:
Lebanon and Sirion like young buffaloes.
7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.
8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness;
The LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh,
9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds (for terror) to calve,
And denudeth the forests:
And in his temple the utterance of all is, "glory."

* Wilson, the traveller, describes such a tempest in the neighbourhood of Baalbek; "I was overtaken by a storm, as if the floodgates of heaven had burst; it came on in a moment, and raged with a power which suggested the end of the world. Solemn darkness covered the earth: the rain descended in torrents, and sweeping down the mountain side, became by the fearful power of the storm transmuted into thick clouds of fog." Cf. also our Lord's parable, taken from life, in Matt. vii. 27.

† Or, "Ye sons of God."

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10 The LORD sitteth enthroned upon the floods;
Yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.
11 The LORD will give strength unto his people;
The LORD will bless his people with peace.

V. 1, 2. The Psalmist translates himself to the regions above, where the events of earth are prepared. The mighty ones of God or the sons of God, *i. e.* his heavenly spirits, are represented as spectators, while the Lord is about to send the messengers of his power to the earth. The Psalmist calls upon them to praise the mighty Lord in the beauty of holiness, *i. e.* after the solemn manner of priests. (Psalm cx. 3.) Heaven is properly the Temple of God, (verse 9; Ps. xi. 4,) of which earthly temples are only the representations. Saints on earth adore and worship at the rising of the Lord's tempests—how much more the holy ones in heaven!

V. 3, 4. The solemn repetition of "The voice of the Lord," occurs seven times. A sevenfold thunder is mentioned Rev. x. 4. It is as if the voice of thunder were audible in sevenfold peals. The waters float as yet heavily along the sky, while the thunder rages with majesty and power in the heavens above them. (Cf. Ps. civ. 3; cxlviii. 4.)

V. 5—9. The thunder of the Lord descends to the earth in the lofty regions of Northern Palestine, in the high mountains of which its power is felt first. The ancient cedars, crowded together on Lebanon and Sirion, (*i. e.* Anti-Lebanon,) leap at the mighty thunder peals, like calves skipping on the pasture or like young buffaloes, and are torn down. The thunder descending to the earth, separates into hissing lightning. The level country, the deserts, the pastures—as far as the southern frontier of Palestine, the wilderness of Kadesh, where the country of the Edomites begins—all shake and tremble. Storm and lightning divest the trees of the forest of their garment, and terror-struck the timid hinds give premature birth to their young. The celestial spectators gaze upon the scene, and the sound of "Glory, glory!" reverberates through the heavenly temple.

V. 10, 11. The Psalmist sees these things not with his physical but with his spiritual eye: the majesty of the Lord, however great and glorious it did appear to him at all times, seems more *royal* still on his beholding the King of nature enthroned over the floods of water. This *revelation* of his majestic power was transient: but the power itself is his for ever and for ever. "Happy are we," he concludes, "if *this* God is our God: happy are we, for he will give us strength and peace."

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PSALM XXX.

A HUMBLE and joyful psalm of praise after deliverance from great affliction. Its title and its contents can be harmonized on the supposition, that David composed it when he dedicated the place for the building of the Temple, on which God had commanded him to erect an altar after the deliverance of the country from the pestilence. (1 Chron. xxi. 18; xxii. 1.) The details of that event were as follows. In spite of the monitions of Joab, not to sin against the Lord, David had insisted upon taking the census of the martial strength of his nation. Joab, afraid of the resistance of the people, had, accompanied by a military escort, gone through the country for that purpose. (2 Sam. xxiv. 4; 1 Chron. xxi. 4.) Though the historical books are not explicit as to the motives of the king, yet the manner of the expressions used seems to indicate that David yielded to the promptings of pride—that he sought in the exact knowledge of his available resources to gratify his ambition, and in the enrolment of those of his subjects who were competent to take up arms, to find a coercive which should render the participation in new military enterprises obligatory to all his subjects.

The assumption of the latter view is suggested by the question of Joab, "My lord king, are they not all my lord's servants?" This measure is the more striking because it falls into the latter portion of the life of David, when his kingdom was not exposed to any danger. The unpopularity of that measure with the people may be inferred from the circumstance, that Joab was obliged to go through the country under military escort, and that he could not make up his mind to extend the census to Benjamin, a tribe much inclined to resistance. (1 Chron. xxi. 6. Cf. on the aversion of Benjamin to the king, Introduction to Psalm lxxviii.) The pestilence raged for three days in the land as a Divine punishment for the daring of the king. David and the elders of Israel, clothed in sackcloth, (*i. e.* mourning apparel,) fell upon their faces with prayers of repentance. Then was the plague stayed, and Gad, the aged prophet, who had stood by David from his youth, delivered the Divine commission to him, that he was to build an altar on the place where the pestilence was stopped, on Moriah. The sacredness in which David held that spot was proportioned to the depths of his repentance. It was to him a standing memorial of the mercy of God. On that identical spot he determined to erect the temple, the building of which he could only prepare but not execute in his advanced age. The Psalm expresses feelings such as we should or might expect then, (after such events,) at the dedication of that place for the building of the temple. His security of pride, which led to the taking of the

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census, is expressed in verses 7, 8, while v. 9—11 denote his fear of being consumed by the judgment of God. (Cf. 2 Sam. xxiv. 17.) He glories at the brief duration of the anger of the Lord in verses 5, 6. Feelings of deep humility and vivid joy alternate in this beautiful psalm.

He glories in his deliverance from the brink of the precipice, (v. 2—4,) and invites the godly to celebrate the riches of the longsuffering and mercy of God, who suffers his anger to endure but for a little, (v. 5, 6.) He describes his former security, as well as his complaint when chastisement broke in, (v. 7, 11,) and regards his deliverance as the most emphatic exhortation to the unceasing praise of the Lord, (v. 12, 13.)

1 A PSALM *and* Song of David *at* the dedication of the temple.
2 I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up,
And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.
3 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee,
And thou hast healed me.*
4 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave:
Thou hast kept me alive, while others went down to the pit.
5 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his,
And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.
6 For his anger *endureth but* a moment;
But his favour for life.
Weeping may come in the evening,
But joy in the morning.
7 And in my prosperity I said,
"I shall never be moved."
8 LORD, by thy favour thou hadst made my mountain to stand strong:
But thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled.
9 I cried to thee, O LORD;
And unto the LORD I made supplication.
10 What profit *is there* in my blood, when I go down to the pit?
Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?
11 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me:
LORD, be thou my helper.
12 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing:
Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness:

* Or, "Thou hast restored me."

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12 To the end that *my* soul* may sing praise to thee, and not be silent.
O LORD, my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

V. 2—4. History coincides with the sentiments of this psalm. David so far from expecting to remain untouched by the pestilence, prompted by his love for his people, actually called the punishment upon his own guilty head. Hence his lively gratitude. He says that he could have borne least the triumphant rejoicings of his foes at home and abroad. Is it possible to think of anything more humiliating than that he should expire beneath the chastising strokes of that God, in whose aid he had so often gloried, and whose support had carried him to so lofty a position? He was preserved alive, while others went down to the pit. For this he had reason to thank and praise the Lord in deep humility but in great joy withal. From the expression, "And thou hast healed me," in verse 3, it does not follow that the king himself was ill, since the words "to heal" and "to build" are used in the Old Testament to denote any kind of healing. David tottered when his kingdom tottered.

V. 5, 6. It is beautifully instructive to notice how the Psalmists rise from their individual to general experience: identifying themselves with the Church they address the Church. The consoling sentiment of verse 6, has dried myriads of tears since David uttered it for the first time. True, our life is made up of so much trouble and anguish, and such a perpetual alternation of light and shade, that hardly a day passes without its sorrow for the present, its care for the future. But the assurance of Divine favour invariably enriches our souls with peace and gladness under present trouble no less than in sight of fears of the future, and the severity of Divine wrath is felt by those who are reconciled to God for hours and moments only: the pious are therefore entitled to say with David, that the proportion of their sense of Divine favour and inward joy to Divine wrath and inward trouble, is like that of their whole life to a moment. This sentiment in the mouth of David shows that he did not determine the measure of his enjoyments and pleasures by what is so called by the many—for since few have to drain a larger cup of affliction than fell to his lot, his delight in life must have been based upon his delight in the love of God. Who else would during so many years of affliction have composed the number of songs of gratitude and praise which David did? (Isa. liv. 7, 8.)

* The original has "soul" (or "tongue") without the pronoun, but such omissions of the pronoun are by no means rare, (Jer. xxxi. 47; xiv. 10; Psalm lx. 6; cxlix. 5.)

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V. 7, 8. David with all his faults is ever ready to admit that the chastisement of God is just, an extremely difficult admission to the majority of men. The ancient declaration of Moses, "that when Israel waxed fat he kicked," (Deut. xxxii. 15,) finds its daily confirmation in life. Though there is nothing more dissonant with a truly pious man, than in prosperity to arrive at a carnal security, yet some even of the pious occasionally yield to this temptation. David is far from saying with Nebuchadnezzar, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel iv. 27.) On the contrary he says, "Lord, by *thy favour* thou hadst made my mountain to stand strong." But his very readiness to trace back all his glory to God exposed him to the danger of mingling self-elevation with his heartfelt joy at the mercy of God; or he may have resembled those who in their confession, "God be merciful to me a sinner," are wont to give the whole emphasis to the word *me* instead of *merciful;* or in praising and considering the gift of God, he may have rejoiced more at the gift than at the *Giver*. The exact computation and mobilisation of his forces indicates a state of mind but little befitting the aged king, who had triumphed over all his enemies, and knew his kingdom secure. He had yet to learn what is expressed in Psalm cxix. 67, "Before I was brought low I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." "Thou hast made *my mountain* to stand strong," may refer to Zion, but "mountain" is probably a figurative expression for "majesty," (*i. e.* royal highness.)

V. 9—11. When the Lord hid his countenance, David sought to move him by his vows, and regarding his earthly existence in the sole aspect of setting forth the glory of God, supplicated the assistance of the Lord.

V. 12, 13. He and the elders of Israel had lain on their faces in mourning apparel before the Lord. Now he was permitted to gird himself with gladness: he determines to make the praises of the Lord the business of his life, and his preparations for the building of the temple are subservient to that intention.

PSALM XXXI.

A PLAINTIVE psalm, composed under a sense of great desertion, from which the Psalmist, however, rises to confidence and firm courage. It evidently belongs to the period of David's flight, when the persecution had been raging for some time, and began to get intolerable, (v. 11.) Commentators have referred this psalm to the

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same period as 1 Sam. xxiii. 26, simply because both there and in v. 23 of this psalm the same word stands in the original.*

Conscious of his confidence in the Lord, he begins the psalm with believing supplication, (v. 2—9;) his cry for help, however, becomes more painful and touching on his realising the continuance and magnitude of his sufferings, (v. 10—19;) but placing, on the other hand, the riches of the mercy of the Lord before his soul, he feels edified and strengthened to a degree, that he wonders how he could have hesitated: and concludes with an exhortation to the godly to repose unwavering trust in the Lord, (v. 22—25.)

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

2 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust;
Let me never be ashamed:
Deliver me in thy righteousness (goodness.)
3 Bow down thine ear to me;
Deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock,
For an house of defence to save me.
4 For thou *art* my rock and my fortress;
Therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
5 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me:
For thou *art* my strength.
6 Into thine hand I commit my spirit:
Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.
7 I hate them that regard lying vanities:
But I trust in the LORD.
8 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy:
For thou hast considered my trouble;
Thou hast known my soul in adversities;
9 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy:
Thou hast set my feet in a large room (space.)
10 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble:
Mine eye is consumed with grief,
Yea, my soul and my belly.

* Jeremiah and Jonah have used this psalm in later times, and borrowed some of its expressions. Cf. Sam. iii. 54, with verse 23; Jer. xx. 10, with verse 14; Jonah ii. 8, with verse 23; Jonah ii. 9, with verse 7; also Psalm xliv. 14; lxxix. 4, with verse 12. That the prophets used the Psalms, and not the Psalmist the prophets, may be inferred from the fondness of Jeremiah to weave the sayings of the ancients into his compositions: it is unmistakable *e. g.* in Psalm i. 3; xxxiii. 7. Cf. in general, *Köper*, Jeremias librorum sacrorum interpres atque index, Berlin, 1837—a work which is not yet sufficiently estimated.

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11 For my life is spent with grief,
And my years with sighing:
My strength faileth because of my punishment,
And my bones are consumed.
12 I am become a reproach among all mine enemies,
But especially among my neighbours,
And a fear to my kindred:
They that see me without flee from me.
13 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind:
I am like a broken vessel.
14 For I have heard the slander of many:
Fear is on every side:
While they take council together against me,
They devise to take away my life.
15 But I trust in thee, O LORD:
I say, "Thou *art* my God."
16 My times *are* in thy hand:
Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies,
And from them that persecute me.
17 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant:
Save me for thy mercies' sake.
18 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon thee:
The wicked shall be ashamed,
They shall be silenced in Sheol.
19 The lying lips shall be put to silence
Which speak grievous things proudly
And contemptuously against the righteous.
20 *Oh* how great *is* thy goodness,
Which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee;
Which thou showest to them that trust in thee before the sons of men!
21 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence
From the device of man:
Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion
From the strife of tongues.
22 Blessed *be* the LORD:
For he hath showed me his marvellous kindness
In a strong city.
23 For I said in my haste,
I am cut off from before thine eyes:
Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications
When I cried unto thee.

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24 O love the LORD, all ye his saints:
For the LORD preserveth the faithful,
And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.
25 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart,
All ye that hope in the LORD.

V. 2—4. The prayer for *speedy* deliverance shows the greatness of his affliction, while verses 10, 11, indicate that he was not inexperienced in the school of sorrows. How many prayers, equally believing, may have preceded this, without having effected the cessation of his season of suffering. We cannot sufficiently admire these words, "IN thee do I put my trust," which with every new day of suffering, rise in undiminished strength. Though a thousand times sent away, we should find it an easy thing to return a thousand times to the same door, did we but possess the assurance of of David that *this is the only way to salvation:* for he knows of no other rock nor fortress than God.

V. 5—9. Most men suffer shipwreck on one of two cliffs; they either march so securely in this life, where, as one of the Fathers observes, man is ever walking on glass, as if no mishap could befall them; or, aware of the uncertainty of human prosperity, they toil and labour in seeking to keep every disturbance of it at a distance, just as if they were able to see and manage everything. David, though perfectly conscious of the thousandfold dangers which beset our every step, yet equally convinced of the utter insufficiency of human foresight, avoids either mistake. He is anxious for his life, but anxious in such a manner that he commits it to the best of advocates. His confidence is not the trial of a novice, who for the first time tests his faith and his God. He is enabled to call God by a name, which if learnt from experience and not from books, is itself a potent shield in the day of temptation. He calls him the God of truth, *i. e.* faithfulness, knows the inanity of every other hope, and is sure that God *remembers him* in days of adversity.

V. 10, 11. The contrast of past experience with present facts impresses him with the full extent of his tribulation. Though a hero in mind, though disciplined in the school of sorrows, yet the grief of his soul has so affected him that his sap of life is consumed and his body attenuated. The sting of conscience has blended with the external causes of his misery. Great evil, according to the divinely instituted connexion between sin and evil, always tends to awaken man's consciousness of guilt. Though in his present troubles innocent before man, he knew himself impure (Cf. ad. Ps. vi. 1) before God, and called therefore his misery his punishment.

V. 12—14. Though these and similar expressions in the Psalms cannot always be taken in a literal sense, (Cf. Ps. lxix. 9; lxxxviii. 19,) they may be conceived as literally true in the case of David.

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A man exiled by his king, who would reward with his royal favour those who betrayed him, (1 Sam. xxii. 8; xxiii. 21,) could not but become the reproach of those whose houses he used to frequent. Nor does the fear of his kindred seem strange, since their connexion with him (especially at a time when enmity towards an individual became transferred upon all his family) was no doubt fraught with danger to them. We read indeed that David, in order to secure the safety of his parents, deemed it necessary to remove them to the land of the Moabites. (1 Sam. xxii. 3.) It was even true that his nearest relatives and friends had forgotten him like a dead man: he could no longer meet with Jonathan, and probably saw his relatives during his decennial flight on that one occasion only when he met them in the cave of Adullam. (1 Sam. xxii. 1.) That cave was near Bethlehem, the town of David's tribe, (cf. the locality in the narrative 2 Sam. xxiii. 13, *etc.*,) and he seems afterwards not to have been so near the capital. "Fear on every side" was experienced by David more than any one else; for no secret nook nor corner of the country was too remote to prevent infuriated Saul from attempting the seizure of the fugitive. Add to all this his many treacherous and false friends.

V. 15—19. David's faith stands the test in the midst of all these temptations of outward affliction: he neither regards the number nor the strength of his enemies, but looks to the hand of God, who distributes the fortunes of men. So the believing child of God, instead of settling his affairs with his enemies, commits them to God from his closet, and while they deem themselves quite secure, the strength of his prayers arrays Heaven against them.

V. 20—22. The consideration of his own experience of the goodness of God, and that in the midst of his severe trials, leads him to break forth into its admiration. His heart is deeply moved. He speaks of the goodness of God in general toward *all that fear him*, because he knows that no arbitrariness comes into play, but as all who approach the sun are, irrespective of choice or favour, warmed and illumed by his genial beams, so the goodness of God does after the same law benefit those who seek and fear the Lord. Many who repose their trust in God are by the fear of man deterred from honouring him before men. David therefore expressly states, that genuine trust in Him ought always to be accompanied by the confession of him as our sole helper, *before all men*. Significant are the terms that God has *laid up* that goodness for the pious, and that he *showeth* it to them; meaning that God reserves more goodness by far than he shows. The Lord has his *festina lente*, and the choicest of his favours are reserved for another world. (See 1 Cor. ii. 9.) But the goodness of God is also displayed to the wicked, as our Lord says in Matt. v. 45, and even the brute creation shares in it. But since this goodness is received according to the measure of individual susceptibility, and since none save believers possess

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the susceptibility for the spiritual goods of God, and since, moreover, none can be truly happy with earthly gifts and possessions save those who receive and use them in the right manner, David may well praise the *peculiar* goodness of God towards his *children*. From the fact that the tabernacle presented an asylum to fugitives, he figuratively states that the pious are hid in the pavilion of God, but afterwards changes the figure and compares the protection of God to a well-fortified city.

V. 23—25. He attempts not to conceal that he too has had his weak hours. He is the more ready to make this humiliating confession, because it sets the longsuffering of God in a stronger light, (who remembers that his saints are still endued with flesh and blood,) and leads to the edifying of desponding minds. He turns to such desponding souls with the express exhortation not to get languid in their love to God, nor to lose courage in the struggles which are appointed for them by transient hours of doubt, nor to measure their power of resistance by their own resources, but by trusting in the Lord to wait for his assistance and support.

PSALM XXXII.

A PENITENTIAL prayer of David, apparently referring to the transgression to which Psalm li. alludes, with this difference, that in Psalm li. there seems to exist a mind which longs for forgiveness, and *here* one which has realised it after the confession of sin. It appears therefore that Ps. li. was composed immediately upon, this some time after David's fall. If according to the title of Ps. li. David composed it after Nathan came to him, we cannot expect it to contain sentiments likely to have occurred immediately after his fall, for Nathan did not meet David till after Bathsheba had given birth to a child. (2 Sam. xii. 14. Cf. xi. 27.) David seems therefore to have hesitated with the confession of his crime for an entire year. The silence before God, which is mentioned in verse 3, ought in this case to be referred to the whole extent of time which preceded that event. It is difficult to suppose such an obduracy in David, although the historical books seem to indicate as much. Is it likely that David should have entertained a moment's misgiving as to the meaning of the parable of Nathan? Not until plainly accused by Nathan did the king as if awaking from the sleep of sin exclaim, "I have sinned against the Lord." There is,

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however, another misgiving besides this. In Psalm li. David has not yet received forgiveness, but prays for it. But Nathan pronounced the consoling sentence, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin," immediately upon David's confession. The last misgiving is certainly not very important, since it is a generally acknowledged experience, that there is often a great gulf between the objective word of forgiveness, presented from without, and its subjective appropriation by man, which hesitating conscience is unable to bridge without great struggles. The prophet pronounced forgiveness; but it was a different thing for David to appropriate and rejoice in it before the Lord. The *first* objection requires a greater consideration. It is very strange indeed that according to the title of Psalm li. and the historical record David should after so great a fall have walked before God in a state of impenitence. The question arises, Will not in the case of such a man confession and repentance have immediately succeeded the deed? which deed?—adultery. The faithless act against Uriah succeeded it. He confesses his silence before God in verse 3. Impenitence *in a certain sense* cannot be denied, but all depends upon the right conception of that impenitence. Nobody will believe that David, after all we know of him, should like other transgressors have—without much trouble—banished that transgression from his thoughts. If by impenitence is meant brutality and insensibility, we emphatically declare that he did *not* remain impenitent. But let it once be clearly seen that *faith* is a necessary ingredient of true repentance, and that a penitent sinner cannot sincerely approach God in prayer without some trust and faith in him, and it will be equally clear that there is another kind of impenitence, devoid not so much of the compunctions of conscience as of *faith*, when terrified conscience is thoroughly alive to guilt, and just *on that account* hesitates to confess it before God. We cannot conceive otherwise of the state of David's mind at that time, and verses 3, 4, of this Psalm furnish the most striking evidence of this view. They exhibit a struggle of conscience, which deprives the impenitent transgressor of rest by day and night, the scourge of which causes flesh and bones to be consumed—just such a struggle as we should presume it in the case of a singer of psalms like those of David. However incredible it may appear to many, that a man who shrinks from confessing his sin before God, should possess so awakened a conscience and endure so much grief at its compunctions—yet they who are acquainted with the peculiar phenomena of psychical life, cannot but know that such inward conditions are sure to follow the transgressions of seriously minded people. Just because the holiness and love of God are not mere empty words to them, but because they have practically experienced the marvellous goodness of God, it comes to pass that their

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own transgressions appear to them in the same light as did the crime of fratricide to Cain, and they exclaim with him, "Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven." They are afraid of the countenance of God, the marvellous loveliness of which they have so often experienced—and they would much rather flee from before it. They have the presentiment that their sin, the heinousness of which terrifies them already, if meditated upon in prayer before God, will assume a still more terrific aspect: owing to the threatenings of the accuser from within, they venture not to believe that before God the compunctive power of their consciences will be sharpened, nor that they will be pardoned. They prefer, therefore, without prayer, their eyes turned away from God, to pursue their path and to consume their grief—to disclosing it before God. The circumstance that David listened to Nathan's parable with such apparent insensibility, ought not to make us hesitate in the assumption, that such was the case with David. We ought to consider that, unless Joab had violated his pledge to secrecy, the king's transgression was by no means generally known—that more than a year had elapsed before Nathan appeared before David—that Nathan stated his parable in the form of a legal case—and that its true significance could only be surmised on the supposition that the matter was generally known, and that Nathan appeared immediately after its occurrence before the king. The condition of David is, however, not to be regarded exclusively in the light of reproaching conscience. We may assume a change of things, involving moments in which excuses and accusations were contending, as Paul describes, (Rom. ii. 15.) Let those who regard the magnitude of his transgression as unaccountable remember, that *most people overlook in the estimate of this transgression* the fact, that however terrific the fatality may have been in this instance, evil always engenders evil, and that he who has fallen once, is by the force of circumstances ever propelled to new transgressions. David had originally no intention to deprive Uriah of his wife, his sole aim being to conceal his own sin, as is intimated in 2 Sam. xi. 9—13. David did not write his letter to Joab until his cunning device had proved a failure. He still listens to the voice of conscience—cannot persuade himself to assassination, but adopts a measure of ridding himself of his servant, which suggested a variety of thoughts which tended to excuse his conduct and to appease his protesting conscience: *e. g.* that in every war many must fall—that if Uriah should be killed, he would at least fall like a hero and as a defender of the kingdom. Let no one condemn David until he has judged himself and answered the candid question, Whether in no relation of his life one sin has not led him to the commission of a second or a third, and he has not sought by excuses of a similar kind to silence the voice of his conscience.

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1 A PSALM of David, giving instruction.*
Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven,
Whose sin *is* covered.
2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,
And in whose spirit *there* is no guile.
3 When I kept silence my bones waxed old.
Through my roaring all the day long.
4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:
My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.
5 Therefore I acknowledge my sin unto thee,
And mine iniquity do I not hide:
I said, "I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;"
And thou forgavest the guilt of my sin. Selah.
6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee
In a time when thou mayest be found:
Surely the floods of great waters,
They shall not come nigh unto him.
7 Thou *art* my hiding place;
Thou shalt preserve me from trouble;
Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.
8 "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go:
I will guide thee with mine eye."
9 Be ye not as the horse,
Or as the mule, *which* have no understanding:
Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,
Which will not come near unto thee (of themselves.)
10 Many sorrows (or pains) *shall be* to the wicked:
But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.
11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous:
And shout for joy, all *ye that are* upright in heart.

V. 1, 2. David utters these words as if he had got breath again after an overwhelming oppression of his soul, and speaks of his own experience as if it were the experience of every one. The words of Nathan, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin," were, as appears from Psalm li. not sufficient to give him peace. There are

* Or, "A Poem."

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many passages in the Scriptures which, if the Holy Ghost were simultaneously to write them into our hearts, would at once stop our struggles and banish our griefs. The fight of faith which lasts all our life long consists first in this, that the words of the Bible are by the struggle of faith in our souls to be transcribed into the book of our hearts. As Luther has it, "The great secret of Christian faith consists in the little words: '*I*, for me, and *me*.'" Joy did not return until the Holy Ghost had borne witness in the heart of David to the words of Nathan. His expression of joy is accompanied by the condition on which alone joy can be attained. He says, "In whose spirit there is no guile," *i. e.* deceit. The discord of the soul can never be removed while the deceit of self-excuse and self-righteousness continues.

V. 3, 4. Rarely, if ever, have human words expressed the struggle of conscience in language so profoundly touching as here. His fevered soul lacked the all-potent cordial, "Thy sins are forgiven thee:" its absence caused his body to pine and wither away. His excuses of self distilled like separate drops upon his burning conscience, which immediately dissolved them into vapour. He sometimes sought to justify himself, and tried to convince himself that there was no ground for his grievous complaint, and sometimes thought that his wounds were incurable.

V. 5. The internal discord having reached its climax, pressed out at last the blissful confession. The brief antithesis, "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord—and thou forgavest the guilt of my sin," expresses in a pleasing and touching manner the facility afforded to sinful man in his inward struggles, provided he be able and willing to confess and to believe.

V. 6, 7. He affirms his own experience as the universal lot of the godly. They embrace the moment when salvation is still nigh, ere the floods of judgment come which sweep the hardened sinner away. The inward struggle must issue in the sinner's turning to God, and his hoping for aid by his *mercy:* if it does not, his end will be like that of Judas, who though not without penitence, (Matt. xxvii. 3,) but lacking the ability and willingness to acknowledge his sin and to believe in God, went and hanged himself. Having for a year been without God—and therefore without protection—David once more feels himself in the hiding-place. This conviction renders him so happy, that he hears, as it were, the voice of God himself, cheering him with paternal friendliness.

V. 8. The latter clause of this verse, "I will guide thee with mine eye," shows that the verse itself is not to be regarded as a promise which David addresses to sinners, but rather as an oracular expression, as they occur in several other psalms, (Cf. ad. Ps. xl. 4; xii. 6.) It is the Spirit of the Lord, who from the inmost chambers of the soul, as if from the ark of the covenant, addresses his words of comfort and encouragement to sinners.

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V. 9. David now addresses the servants of sin who refuse to turn unto the Lord, until he causes them to feel his hands, and holds them in with bit and bridle. Beasts—such is the Psalmist's meaning—have no understanding, and on that account need the bit and bridle from without, to be managed; but man, to whom God has given his Spirit, should govern and tame himself from within. Shame upon him who, having received the Divine spark, instead of being impelled from within, needs chastisement from without to lead him to his Lord and God!

V. 10, 11. David describes the great foolishness of those who look for happiness and joy anywhere and everywhere except in God: man, forgetful of God, chases after happiness and joy, ignoring all the while that in turning from God he only increases his sorrow and pain. "Only he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." David has just realized once more this blessed truth, so blessed that he must needs invite every one to become the sharer of his felicity.

PSALM XXXIII.

A PSALM of praise, celebrating in lively and joyous measures the Creator and Governor of the world, who has chosen Israel for his peculiar possession, and imparts his peculiar favour to those who fear him.

The Psalmist utters a powerful and joyous invitation to the praise of God, (v. 1—3:) he celebrates his omnipotence as the omnipotence of righteousness and love, (v. 4—11,) and glories in Israel's enjoying the peculiar protection of that God. It must be secure under such a protection, for everything that *is* and takes place on earth is mysteriously connected with his hand, while all earthly strength is derived from him, (v. 12—17.) They who fear him shall experience his power. This thought expands into the same exultation with which this psalm begins.

1 REJOICE in the LORD, O ye righteous:
For praise is comely for the upright.
2 Praise the LORD with harp:
Sing unto him with the psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings.
3 Sing unto him a new song;
Play skilfully with trumpet sound.

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4 For the word of the LORD *is* right;
And all his doings *are done* in faithfulness.
5 He loveth righteousnes and judgment:
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.
6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made;
And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.
7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap:
He layeth up the depth in storehouses.
8 Let all the earth fear the LORD:
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
9 For he spake, and it was *done;*
He commanded, and it stood fast.
10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought:
He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.
11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever,
The thoughts of his heart to all generations.
12 Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD;
And the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.
13 The LORD looketh from heaven;
He beholdeth all the sons of men.
14 From his firm throne
He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.
15 He leadeth their hearts alike;
He considereth all their works.
16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host:
A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.
17 An horse *is* a vain thing for safety:
Neither shall *any* be delivered by their (the horses') great strength.
18 Behold the eye of the LORD *is* upon them that fear him,
Upon them that hope in his mercy;
19 To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.
20 Our soul waiteth for the LORD:
He *is* our help and our shield.
21 For our heart shall rejoice in him,
Because we have trusted in his holy name.
22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us,
According as we hope in thee.

V. 1—3. The Psalmist invites the righteous and the upright in heart to praise the Lord, because none but they know how to do

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it aright. The melody of the voice without the melody of the heart cannot please the Lord. Such is the praise of the ungodly. The pious only can praise him in truth, for they only rejoice in his promises, and appreciate his omnipotence and goodness. The bard, feeling that the heart and the senses are too slow and lifeless for setting forth the praises due to God, calls the sound of the harp to his aid, to arouse the indolent spirits, and to give pinions to his praises. He calls for a *new* (Ps. xl. 4; xcvi. 1) song—as if all the former ones were not sufficient. Because human praises are at the best unworthy, the nations of antiquity as well as Israel used to accompany them by sacrifices, intending thereby as it were to complete and make up for the deficiency and poverty of human praise. The mention of the trumpet alludes to those sacrifices, as sacrifices used to be offered accompanied by the sound of the trumpet.

V. 4, 5. The first object of praise is that God fulfils his promises. Surely there cannot be anything more joyful to a pious man than to see that the divers glorious promises of God are for ever being fulfilled in the guidance of men in obedience to laws as unchangeable as those which direct the courses of the heavenly bodies. If we shall hereafter review the guidances of his people from eternity, may they not, to use the expression, seem like so many *incarnations* of the eternal word and the eternal promises of God? We shall then *see*, what the Psalmist here praises in faith—that all the ways of the Lord are righteousness and goodness. The full glory of these attributes is not felt till we realize them as the attributes of the omnipotence of God: what would be the condition of us, the creatures, were his omnipotence other than the omnipotence of righteousness and love? For this reason the Psalmist praises in the following verses the omnipotence of God.

V. 6—9. How much toil and labour intervenes between the resolution and completion of our works? With God the word, the breath of his mouth, and the commandment, are at once the deed.* Thus he formed the heavens and their host. Nothing greater could be predicated of the omnipotence of God: the Psalmist singles out one miracle of omnipotence which strikingly exhibits the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. Though the waters of the ocean are higher than the face of the earth, the secret hand of Omnipotence keeps them back that they dare not flood the land. "Will ye not tremble at my presence, saith the Lord, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet cannot they prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" (Jer. v. 22; cf. Psalm xxiv. 2; civ. 9; Job

* The heathen poet, Longinus, has praised the sublimity of this sentiment of the Psalmist.

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xxxviii. 8.) Again, the womb of the earth conceals subterraneous floods; these would devour the face of the earth and all on it, if the hand of Omnipotence did not hold them back so that they must remain in the depth. Who does not fear and tremble before a God like this? But they who can believe that this omnipotence is the omnipotence of love, burst forth the rather in exultant joy.

V. 10—12. Israel is entitled to that belief—the belief that the omnipotence of God is that of love, for the Lord has chosen Israel for his own inheritance. What an election! His thoughts are *eternal* thoughts of grace which no power can annul. (Rom. xi. 29.) This is the consolation of the Church of God in sight of her enemies. In the days of the Old Testament, when the Church was a temporal kingdom, like the kingdoms of the earth, her enemies were the heathen in their dominions; her enemies now are the enemies of Christ: the servants of Christ get edified by these promises that the merciful counsel of God cannot be overthrown, and that he bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought. Though scanned with the eye of sense, there never was a little band that had so little hope to prevail over their enemies, as the small band of Christians against whom the whole world stands in battle array; but with regard to the eternal counsel of mercy which God has decreed concerning his people, they entertain not a moment's doubt as to their ultimate success.

V. 13—17. People of God, he means to say, let not the world persuade you that the throne on which your king is seated is an idle easy chair; no, he is seated on a *throne*, on a *judgment-seat*, from the lofty eminence of which proceed the destinies of the world. People of God, he means to say, firmly believe, that all things are either openly or in a hidden manner subject to the influence of his might; not only the works of men, which are evidently so, since the issue never rests with them, but also the secret movings of their hearts, which God can strike with blindness, and can make foolish the understanding of the prudent, and wise the hearts of babes. People of God, believe not in appearances according to which kings conquer by their might and warriors triumph in battle by the strength of their horses: it is appearance only, for as all earthly power is borrowed from the Governor of the world, he may withdraw it at *any time* and give it to *whomsoever* he pleases: so that all the victories on earth are won by *his* strength.

V. 18—22. While such omnipotence terrifies those who fear not the Lord, it is rich in consolation to those who hope in his mercy. The whole people commit themselves to the Lord, rejoicing in him and trusting in *his name.*

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PSALM XXXIV.

A SONG of thanksgiving, composed on the same occasion (1 Sam. xxi. 11, *etc.*) as Psalm lvi. with this difference, that Psalm lvi. was composed in the midst of the danger which threatened David, when the courtiers of Achish the king of the Philistines, with whom he had taken refuge, were persecuting him, while the psalm before us was composed after he had escaped from that danger. Though we owe our most beautiful spiritual songs or hymns to special circumstances, they treat not of these, but alternately mount to universal complaints or to universal praises of God. So the Psalmist praises not so much his special deliverance, as the mercy of God, who hears the cry of the afflicted. The title names Abimelech and not Achish; which may be explained on the presumption that Abimelech (*i. e.* father of kings) was a general title of the Philistine kings, as was Pharaoh (*i. e.* the king) of the Egyptian. In Gen. xx. 2; xxvi. 1, two different kings of Gerar, the Philistine capital, are called Abimelech.

Filled with gratitude, the Psalmist promises to make the praise of God the business of his life, because he hears the prayers of the afflicted, (v. 2—8.) He also calls upon others to open their eyes and hearts because the goodness of God is everywhere manifest, and annexes the condition on which alone it can be experienced, (v. 9—11.) The indispensable condition is *the fear of the Lord*, which he earnestly and affectionately recommends from verses 12—23, and to which his assurance of faith ascribes glorious promises.

1 A PSALM of David, when he changed his behaviour
before Abimelech: who drove him away, and he
departed.
2 I will bless the LORD at all times:
His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.
3 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD:
The afflicted shall hear *thereof* and be glad.
4 O magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt his name together.
5 I sought the LORD, and he heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
6 They that look unto him, get lightened:
And their faces are not ashamed.
7 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*,
And saved him out of all his troubles.

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8 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them
that fear him,
And delivereth them.
9 O taste and see that the LORD *is* good:
Blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.
10 O fear the LORD, ye his saints:
For *there is* no want to them that fear him.
11 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:
But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good
thing.
12 Come, ye children, hearken unto me:
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
13 What man *is he that* desireth a happy life
And loveth *many* days, that he may see good?
14 Keep thy tongue from evil,
And thy lips from speaking guile.
15 Depart from evil, and do good;
Seek peace,* and pursue it.
16 The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous,
And his ears *are open* unto their cry.
17 The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil,
To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
18 *The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth,
And delivereth them out of all their troubles.
19 The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;
And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
20 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous:
But the LORD delivereth him out of them all.
21 He keepeth all his bones:
Not one of them is broken.
22 Evil shall slay the wicked:
And they that hate the righteous shall be guilty.
23 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants:
And none of them that trust in him shall be guilty.†

V. 2—4. Every day of a pious man's life is marked with the monuments and tokens of the mercy of God, so that he has every day to sing a new song. But each separate experience of that kind should fill our heart to such a degree as to furnish the theme of gratitude and praise for the entire period of our lives. With a feeling of this kind, we see David celebrate the deliverance he has just experienced. He realizes the fact that many hearts will echo

* *I. e.* honesty, "good;" cf. Ps. xxxv. 20; xxxvii. 37, in the Hebrew.
† Cf. Introduction to Psalm xiv.

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back his songs of praise, because the joys of the godly are always universal. He invites the sharers of his feelings not to keep them within their joyful hearts, but to blend their praises with his, because songs of praise rise more triumphantly to heaven as bright flames than as isolated sparks.

V. 5—8. He was no doubt greatly afraid. What fate could he expect to meet were he delivered into the hand of Achish? The alternative was, that he, as a national foe, who had slain Goliath and actually carried his sword during this flight, (1 Sam. xxi. 9,) would either be sacrificed to the vengeance of the Philistines, or ignominiously delivered into the hand of Saul, his enemy. This poor man cried unto the Lord, who heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles. He therefore calls upon all, when reduced to the extremity of trouble, neither to turn to the right nor to the left, but to Him who is all-sufficient. We often fear that we are forsaken—but not so. He surrounds us with his Divine messengers, as with an invisible host: and while we look anxiously for help on earth, they fight our battles. If our eyes were opened like those of Elisha's young man, we should frequently, when we are most inclined to despair, see horses and chariots of fire round about us. (2 Kings vi. 17.)*

V. 9—11. Heaven and earth are replete with the goodness of God. We omit to open our mouths and eyes, on which account the Psalmist desires us to *taste* and to *see*. Such an invitation would be unavailing to the ungodly, to whom if they persist in their obduracy even the best gifts are fraught with destruction, and to whom rays of light turn into consuming flashes of lightning. He therefore addresses himself to the *saints*, who in virtue of their exercised senses (Heb. v. 11,) are able to see the hidden sweet in the bitter, and the bow of peace above the darkened cloud. "They have no want," means not exemption from the common lot of mortals, as is clear from verse 20, where it is said that "many are the afflictions of the righteous." But if blessings attend us like those which David affirms himself to enjoy in Psalm xxiii. 5, that in sight of his enemies he is seated at a full table with anointed head —we must be silent about want. We shall feel no want though we be in want. The possession of power and strength cannot of itself secure satisfaction and prosperity. The lion, armed with mouth and claws, has often to suffer hunger, while helpless and afflicted men, whose only refuge is the Lord, have enough and to spare.

* *One* angel of the Lord is mentioned, who at the same time is said to *encamp round about*. This seems to indicate that the word "angel" which primarily means "a message from God," denotes here as well as in many other passages of the Old Testament, not one separate angel, but the effluence of Divine strength. Cf. Sack. Comm. Theol. p. 19, v. Cœlln. Bibl. Theol. vol. i. p. 191.

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V. 12—19. Most men consider untruth, fraud, and oppression, the surest means of prosperity. This leads David most urgently to exhort them to regard the fear of the Lord as the true source of temporal prosperity. To rouse the indolent, he clothes his exhortation in the form of a question, "What man is he that desireth a happy life?" as if he had asked, How is it, that, while every one without exception desires to be happy, there are so few who adopt the proper means for the attainment of happiness, but on the contrary make themselves wretched and miserable by their own mistakes? He names two things, which, though they may sometimes fail, will in most instances tell upon men, and lay a solid foundation to their temporal prosperity. Firstly, let none imagine that crooked ways and falsehood are the royal roads to prosperity, for even in a spiritual sense the straight way is always the shortest. Secondly, to confound all evil backbiting by the practice of good works. However much enmity against God may influence the wicked against the good qualities of the godly, there will always be a class of men, who find it impossible so effectually to silence the judge from within, that they should desire to acknowledge the merit of these, who with firm perseverance and strict conscientiousness are bent upon the pursuit of righteousness and virtue. Much time may be needed till such acknowledgment be forthcoming, and in the case of thousands be looked for in vain; David therefore once more regards the righteous in affliction, and comforts us by saying, that the Lord at least does not ignore a pure and true life, that his eyes look upon his servants, that his ears are open to their cry, and that though not exempt from troubles and affliction, his deliverance is sure to come.

V. 20—23. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous:" this might at first sight seem contradictory of verses 10, 11; but we should remember that the pious often lack that purity and irreprehensibility of conduct, which compels the esteem of the world; the difficulty of attaining it, and that even after it has been attained we are utterly unable to impress the consciences of the thoroughly obdurate. The truth must then stand that "many are the the afflictions of the righteous," or as the New Testament expresses it, "It behoves us through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of God." And it is a good thing that such is the case. For were the pious freed from every trouble and affliction, motives to piety would become impure, faith would grow faint, prayer cease, and carnal security abound. The Psalmist comforts us that the afflictions of the righteous are under a powerful protection. The Lord has said that the hairs of our head are numbered: so we are told here that not the smallest bone of the godly can be hurt without his permission. (Psalm xxxv. 10.) But guilt shall not leave the wicked, for it cannot be forgiven until it be confessed, repented of, and covered by faith.

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PSALM XXXV.

We are familiar with the position of the Psalmist. Secret persecution, (v. 7, 8,) and false accusations, (v. 11,) were met by a peaceful and forgiving disposition on his part, (v. 12, 13.) Cf. Introduction to Psalm vii. Other circumstances are in harmony with the situation of David. The bard refers to himself in v. 27, as to a man noticed by many. Verse 16 may suggest the courtly banquet of the king: David uses words similar to v. 1—3 in 1 Sam. xxiv. 16. The urgency of the request, and the manner in which danger and trouble are introduced, seem to cope better with the period of Saul's persecution than with that of David's residence at his court.

V. 1—10 state the theme of the Psalmist—a mighty cry for help and a solemn vow of gratitude: v. 11—16, he shows the justice of his cause as contrasted with that of his persecutors, who proved themselves insensible to his proofs of tender sympathy, and requited his sympathy in *their* suffering with malevolent joy at *his* own. Having stated before the throne of God's justice this by no means unimportant point in his case, he renews his supplication, (v. 17,) and concludes with a new vow of heartfelt gratitude, (v. 25.)

A PSALM of David.

1 Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me:
Fight against them that fight against me.
2 Take hold of shield and buckler,*
And stand up for mine help.
3 Draw out also the spear,
And stop *the way* against them that persecute me;
Say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation.
4 Let them be confounded and put to shame
That seek after my soul:
Let them be turned back and brought to confusion
That devise my hurt.
5 Let them be as chaff before the wind:
And let the angel of the LORD chase *them.*
6 Let their way be dark and slippery:
And let the angel of the LORD persecute them.
7 For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit,†
Which without cause they have digged for my soul.

* *I. e.* a large shield which covers the whole body.

† Travellers mention pits which are dug to catch lions alive, covered on the top with boughs and canes, (Shaw's Travels in North Africa, p. 153.) But these seem to have been pits in which nets were placed. Verse 8 renders this view necessary.

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8 Let destruction come upon them at unawares;
And let the net, that they have hid, catch them.
Into that very destruction let them fall.
9 But my soul shall be joyful in the LORD:
It shall rejoice in his salvation.
10 All my bones shall say,
LORD, who *is* like unto thee,
Which deliverest the afflicted from him that is too strong for him,
Yea, the afflicted and the needy from him that spoileth them?
11 False witnesses did rise up;
They laid to my charge *things* that I knew not.
12 They rewarded me evil for good,
My soul is orphaned.
13 But as for me,
When they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth:
I afflicted my soul with fasting.
And my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*
14 I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend *or* brother.
I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his* mother.
15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together:
Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew not *for what:*
They did tear *me*, and ceased not:
16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts,†
They gnashed upon me with their teeth.
17 LORD, how long wilt thou look on?
Rescue my soul from their destructions,
My life from the lions.
18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation:
I will praise thee among much people.
19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me:
Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.

* *I. e.* when he who prayed, as it happened in cases in deep distress, fell on his knees and inclined his head to the ground, (1 Kings xviii. 42.)

† Or, "With mocking gluttons," or, "like gourmands" (cf. Job xxxiv. 36, in the original;) or, "quizzing epicures."

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20 For they speak not peace:
But they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land.
21 Yea, they open their mouth wide against me,
And say, Aha! aha! our eye hath seen *it*.
22 *This* thou hast seen, O LORD:
Keep not silence: O LORD, be not far from me.
23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment,
Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.
24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness;
And let them not rejoice over me.
25 Let them not say in their hearts, "Ah! so would we have it."
Let them not say, "We have swallowed him up."
26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together
That rejoice at mine hurt:
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour
That magnify *themselves* against me.
27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad,
That favour my righteous cause:
Yea, let them say continually, "Let the LORD be magnified,
Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant."
28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness
And of thy praise all the day long.

V. 1—3. Human weakness, which can only speak figuratively of God, conceives of the distribution of Divine justice as of a warfare carried on with human weapons, though the weapons of the righteous Lord against his enemies are not made of brass. Such figurative representations of God tend to furnish us with a more vivid apprehension of his powerful help. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation," expresses the Psalmist's desire for that secret and inward encouragment direct from God, which he is sure to impart in the hour of need.

V. 4—10. He prays that according to the law of retaliation, confusion should befall the contemners, and that those who were trumpeting forth their pride should be scattered like chaff before the wind, that those who in their haughty confidence deemed themselves strong as mountains should see the soil give way under their feet, and that those who had digged pits for others might in their own pits be destroyed. We have often seen it thus in life, though the longsuffering of God checks the hand of justice, as long as there is any hope that the weed may become good wheat. Most

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people in prayers of this kind are solely concerned with their own deliverance—but the spirit of David rejoices in the prospect of the moment, when as it were moved with gratitude in all his bones, he will ascribe all the glory to the Lord, and confess that no other *help* can be compared to *his*.

V. 11—16. Oppression and violence are never more painful than when they proceed from those who have experienced the proofs of our love. We have already seen (Psalm vii. 5) to how great an extent that species of painful experience fell to the lot of David. Saul himself, ashamed of his conduct, and weeping over it, had said to David, "Thou art more righteous than I, *for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.*" (1 Sam. xxiv. 17.) David, though speaking of several, may either have alluded to Saul in particular or to his courtiers possessed of hostile intentions against him. Let it be observed that he not only refers to benefits which our hand may confer without any cordial sympathy, but to such evidences of love as necessarily imply the interest of our hearts. He had *prayed* for those who now persecute him. Such sympathy with *their* sufferings they now requite with malevolent joy at *his*. The malicious accusations of verse 11, have already been considered in Psalm vii. Verse 16 may respect the king only, who joined by flattering courtiers used to vent his rage against the afflicted exile; or David may contemplate particular companions of the king, accustomed to join the epicures at the royal table. (Cf. Psalm lxix. 13.)

V. 17—28. These verses depict still more graphically the rude fury of malevolent joy. The righteous God in heaven cannot be silent at such triumphs of wickedness: their impudence must lead to the display of his vengeance. David is aware that he has still some friends in the country, at once the friends of God and of righteousness, who would regard (v. 27) the triumph of his cause as the universal triumph of righteousness, and accordingly praise the Lord for it. His tongue shall gratefully join their praise.

PSALM XXXVI.

A LOFTY psalm of supplication, in which the Psalmist starting from his own temptation and persecution (v. 12) represents men as if divided into two families or armies. While the wicked devise only evil against the children of God, he beholds the wings of a blessed God spread over these as their protection. Inspired by this vision he prays trustfully for himself.

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1 TO the chief Musician, A *Psalm* of David, the servant of the LORD.
2 The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart,*
That there is no fear of God before their eyes.
3 For they flatter him (God) in their own eyes (*i. e.* as they think,)
Until their iniquity be found to be hateful.†
4 The words of their mouth *are* iniquity and deceit:
They have left off to be wise, *and* to do good.
5 They devise mischief upon their bed;
They set themselves in a way *that* is not good;
They abhor no evil.
6 Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in (or, "as far as") the heavens:
And thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto (or, "as far as") the clouds.
7 Thy righteousness *is* like the mountains of God;
Thy judgments *are* like great seas.
O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.
8 How precious *is* thy loving-kindness, O God!
The children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.
9 They get drunk with the riches of thine house:
And thou makest them drink of the river of thy pleasures.
10 For with thee *is* the fountain of life:
In thy light do we see light.
11 O spread thy loving-kindness over them that know thee;
And thy righteousness over the upright in heart.
12 Let not the foot of pride come against me,
And let not the hand of the wicked remove me.
13 Already‡ are the workers of iniquity fallen:
They are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

* Or, "a Divine oracle says from the depth of my heart concerning the wickedness of the ungodly." This rendering of this difficult passage agrees in the main with that of *Symmachus* and *Luther*. The view of Maurer may also be defended, who regards the words, "Divine voice" as a title. Jer. xxiii. 31, shows that נְאֻם may be a noun substantive. That view has the advantage of beautiful correspondence in verse 1, while our explanation has the double inconcinnity that the first hemistich announces the Divine voice, and the second begins it at once, and that the contents of the Psalm are not exactly stated, in calling it a Divine oracle "concerning the wickedness of the ungodly," or concerning wickedness for the ungodly." It is rather an oracular consolation for the suffering godly.

† Tholuck translates verse 3, "For they flatter God, as they think to perform their evil with greater security, and to give vent to their hatred."

‡ Cf. Ps. xiv. 5, xlviii. 7, in the Hebrew.

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V. 2—5. There are moments in our life, when the dimness and mystery of the course of the world suddenly dissolve, and the world, seen in the light of faith, assumes a new appearance. David seems to have composed this psalm in such a moment of physical elevation. When he beheld with unusual charity the blessedness of the children of God, in spite of their trials and temptations, he felt the Spirit of God breathe upon him as upon a prophet, and under the influence of the Divine afflatus uttered an oracular sentence respecting the wicked, *i. e.* respecting their persecutions of the righteous. Their professed fear of the Lord is hypocrisy, which does not avail with God, though they imagine that under its cloak they can carry on their mischief with greater impunity. As a corrupt tree cannot bear good fruit, nor thorns yield grapes, so all they do, however much it glitters, is only mischief and destruction.

V. 6—8. He turns from the wretched oppressors to the oppressed children of God. Desirous to depict the blessedness of their condition in spite of the devices of the wicked, his thoughts expand, and describe the vast and infinite extent of Divine mercy, truth, and righteousness, the chief portion of which benefits the pious. He affirms the goodness of God to reach to the heavens, and his truth to the clouds; whereby he means to say that the universe is filled with them, and that human eyes are unable to measure their dimensions. The expressions that righteousness is like the mountains of God, *i. e.* like *glorious* and *immense* mountains, (Gen. xiii. 10; Psalm lxxx. 11,) and that his judgments are like great seas, denote the immoveability of the eternal foundations of right, and the apparency of their existence in the world. How rich in mercy must be the wings of Divine Providence, since not only man but also beast are sheltered in their vast shade! Such and similar expressions may easily glide over our lips, but to retain them immoveably in our heart is a problem of faith which hardly one in a thousand can solve. There is no mystery of Christianity more difficult to believe than the simple truth that righteousness, truth, and goodness secretly pervade the chaos of transgression and injustice, of misery and woe, which fill the world. By *truth* (the word used in the German version) is meant the faithfulness of God in the fulfilment of his promises. The natural man treats this very adhesion to the faithfulness of God on the part of the godly as sheer folly in sight of occurrences which to all appearance contradict the word of God, and in a world which seems governed by any other power rather than the tears and the prayers of some few wretched croakers, they who in spite of all this—for instance, like David on his flight, in his exile, in tribulation, and nakedness, and in peril of death—can say, concerning the promises of God, "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds"—have stood the test of faith. If any ask for the evidence that faith like this is not extinct, let them read the song of steel and brass which John the Magnanimous

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sang after the battle of Mühlberg, in a situation not less desperate than that of David, "*As it pleaseth God, so it pleaseth me.*"

V. 9, 10. Though the Psalmist had spoken in the former part of the psalm of man in general, it is evident from these verses that he specially adverted to the children of God. David describes the blessings of the house of God in such lofty terms, that some interpreters have thought him to allude to the *everlasting habitations*, where the treasury of God with the plenitude of its riches shall be displayed before believers.* But we have already seen from other psalms, that the Psalmists regard the house of God as a figure of the sum total of every and any blessing which is enjoyed in communion with God: this is apparent from the sentence which follows immediately afterwards, "For *with thee* is the fountain of life." (Cf. ad. Psalm xv. 1; xxiii. 6.) So David sings, (Psalm lxv. 5,) "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." The sacred bard's meaning is, therefore, that though apparently the ungodly enjoy abundance in their life, yet because their *souls* continue hungering and thirsting, it really is the lot of believers to experience what is meant by real satisfaction and abundance. It cannot be denied, that a morsel of dry bread and a cup of cold water consumed with a grateful heart, and the consciousness of the presence of God, is a feast with which no royal feast can stand the comparison: while the wicked take one gift after the other from morn till night, without even a thought of the bounteous hand which bestows them, David's eye of faith beholds high above the clouds the source, the blessings whereof water and make fruitful all the earth. Now, since the sum-total of the good which man enjoys flows from God, the children of God may rest satisfied that they shall not fall short in its distribution. "In thy light do we see light," refers primarily to happiness and good of every kind,† but finds a peculiarly beautiful application in the light of knowledge, which can never guide us in the right direction, except it have been lighted by the eternal light of God, as Daniel has it, "He revealeth the deep and secret things; he knoweth what is in the darkness, for *the light dwelleth with him*," (Dan. ii. 22;) yea, the living fountain of the knowledge of God is only to be sought with God, nor has any one ever found God except by God.

V. 11—18. Thus far the *description*, now follows *prayer*. Having had to suffer from the devices of the wicked, he prays God in mercy to reveal himself to all the godly as the great Being

* Cf. the Commentaries of Kimchi, Venema, Klauss, p. 212.

† As Job says, "Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness." (Job xxix. 2, 3.)

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whom they adore and worship, and to graciously confer the same happy experience upon himself. His prophetic vision sees the judgment as *already* accomplished. Indeed the present prosperity of the wicked can only be regarded as a term of the longsuffering of God, which gives them the opportunity, by repentance, to escape the final judgment of God.

PSALM XXXVII.

A DIDACTIC psalm on the ultimate victory of the children of God over the wicked. Though the Psalmist does not explicitly refer that victory to eternity, the consciousness of future judgment must have been alive in his heart, since otherwise he could not well have so confidently held out a happy end to the godly and an unhappy one to the ungodly, (cf. verses 37, 38, with Ps. i. 5.) The reiterated prediction, moreover, that the children of God shall inherit the earth, and the wicked be destroyed, (v. 9. 28, 29,) can only have a meaning on the supposition that David, overlooking the present, had before his mind the victorious future of the godly. These *allusions* of the Psalmist have been more clearly expressed by the Prophets. Isa. xi. 9; lx. 21; Zech. xiv. 21; Mal. iv. 1—8, (ch. iii. 19—21.)

This psalm exhibits no progression of thought, but repeats like a musical composition the same theme in different variations.

A PSALM of David.

1 Fret not thyself because of evil doers,
Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.
2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,
And wither as the green herb.
3 Trust in the LORD, and do good;
Dwell in the land and be honest.*
4 Delight thyself also in the LORD;
And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
5 Commit thy way unto the LORD;
Trust also in him: and he shall bring *it* to pass.
6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light,
And thy judgment (*i. e.* right) as the noonday.

* Luther: "Earn an honest livelihood."

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7 Be silent to the LORD, and wait patiently for him:
Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way,
Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.
8 Cease from anger and forsake wrath:
Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil:
9 For evil doers shall be cut off:
But those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.
10 For yet a little while, and the wicked *shall* not *be:*
Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and he *shall* not *be.*
11 But the meek shall inherit the earth;
And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
12 The wicked plotteth against the just,
And gnasheth upon him with his teeth.
13 The LORD shall laugh at him:
For he seeth that his day is coming.
14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow,
To cast down the poor and needy,
And to slay such as be of upright conversation.
15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart,
And their bows shall be broken.
16 A little that a righteous man hath
Is better than the riches of many wicked.
17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken:
But the LORD upholdeth the righteous.
18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright:
And their inheritance shall be for ever.
19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time:
And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
20 For the wicked shall perish,
And the enemies of the LORD *shall be* as the fat of lambs (or, "like the pride of the pastures:")
They shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.
21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again:
But the righteous showeth mercy and giveth.
22 For *such as be* blessed of him (the Lord) shall inherit the earth:
And *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off.
23 The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD:
And he delighteth in his way.

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24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down:
For the LORD upholdeth *him with* his hand.
25 I have been young and *now* am old;
Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his seed begging bread.
26 *He is* ever merciful, and lendeth;*
And his seed *is* blessed.
27 Depart from evil and do good;
And dwell for evermore.
28 For the LORD loveth judgment (right,)
And forsaketh not his saints;
They are preserved for ever:†
But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.
29 The righteous shall inherit the land,
And dwell therein for ever.
30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom,
And his tongue talketh of judgment (right.)
31 The law of God *is* in his heart;
None of his steps shall slide.
32 The wicked watcheth the righteous,
And seeketh to slay him.
33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand,
Nor condemn him when he is judged.
34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way,
And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land:
When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.
35 I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a green bay tree.
36 Yet he passeth away, and lo he *was* not:
Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.
37 Mark the honest *man*, and behold the upright (or, "Preserve piety and honesty:")
For the end of *that* man *is* peace.‡

* Psalm cxii. 5.

† According to ancient readings this verse is probably to be rendered, "But the wicked shall be destroyed, and the seed of the ungodly shall be cut off."

‡ Instead of Luther's version, which is also that of Jerome and Aben Ezra (with which cf. the use of אַרְשׁ Psalm cxii. 5,) a more correct rendering is probably, "For the good man has an end," *i. e.* a *good* end. The rendering, "Mark the honest man, and behold the upright, for the man of peace shall have offspring," which has been preferred by many ancient and modern translators, is inadmissible. The respective Hebrew word אַחֲרִית

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38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together:
The wicked shall be cut off at last.
39 But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the LORD:
He is their strength in the time of trouble.
40 And the LORD shall help them and deliver them:
He shall deliver them from the wicked,
And save them, because they trust in him.

V. 1, 2. Godly people, if they do not take great care, are exposed to fall a prey to the two sins which David mentions. On seeing the enterprises of the ungodly crowned with success, they are prone to yield either to personal and passionate indignation, or to envy at what is granted to the former and withheld from themselves. The Psalmist checks that foolish indignation by the consideration, that compared with the final and eternal salvation of the godly, the most redeeming prosperity of the wicked would vanish as speedily as the grass which lustily grows at morn, but struck by the heat of the sun, and the fiery breath of the east wind, is so faded and withered at even, that it is cut off and cast into the oven for fuel. (Matt. vi. 30; James i. 11.)

V. 3—6. On the other hand the prosperity of the godly is immoveably firm: its very protraction only secures its imperishable duration. Steadfastly observe therefore the *condition* on which that prosperity depends. It is *faith* and *hope* in the Lord: simple honesty in our several vocations: delight and satisfaction in the communion with God as contrasted with the thousandfold allurements of the world: and lastly, let our anxieties and burdens be neither complained of in melancholy strains nor discarded in light-mindedness, but rolled upon the *Lord*. Our righteousness may then abide for a time in darkness, or seem ignominious in the sight of men—the day is sure to come when it shall shine as a light, and our judgment (*i. e.* right) as the midday sun.

V. 7—11. Where faith is wanting we need not be surprised to see the heart riding on billows in the storms of life. Having asked for *faith*, David may also desire the *silence of the heart*. Besides, is not our premature haste to help ourselves, instead of quietly waiting for the arm of the Lord, the very means of shutting out Divine help? But he chiefly insists upon the silence of the heart, because a heart moved with passion under pressure is most inclined to get wrathful against the ungodly, and by doing so, to *fall into sin*. This exhortation shows that the Psalmist's repeatedly threatening destruction to the wicked, which occurs both here and elsewhere, flows not from passion, but from his calm contem-

is undoubtedly more correctly rendered "end." Job xlii. 12; Prov. xxiv. 14.) Stier has the merit, by collating with Prov. xxiii. 18; xxiv. 14. 20, to have first shown, that no other rendering is admissible in this place.

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plation of the eternal and necessary order of the righteousness of God. Striking is the prediction that the godly shall inherit the earth, which has already occurred, Psalm xxv. 13. It was originally made to Israel on entering Canaan; but it has since then been repeated in a spiritual sense, and the prophets point to a period when Israel shall destroy the ungodly, and the seed of the truly righteous only possess the land. Our Lord took up this very prediction, (Matt. v. 5,) and explained its profound meaning. Though the prediction meets a partial fulfilment in that the prosperity of the wicked comes frequently to a sudden and terrific end, while honesty is the best policy, yet the entire fulfilment thereof will take place, when the completed community of the righteous, after the exclusion of every tare and every plant which the Father hath not planted, (Matt. xv. 13,) shall take possession of that new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter iii. 13.)

V. 12—15. It is true, says the Psalmist, that while the wicked are suffered to bend their bow (as is the case on earth,) the godly do not experience much of the unclouded peace and delight which are described in verse 11. But while the godly still weep and hesitate, the Lord laugheth, because he sees that future day as already present, when every blow of the wicked shall return upon his own head. Now, if man have *faith*, the nature of which is to regard the future as the present, may *he* not on that account dry his tears and join in the laugh of his God?

V. 16—26. David denies not that with respect to temporal possessions the godly may fare worse than others, but he gives an answer similar to that which Luther addressed from his dying bed to his children: "Children, I leave you no riches, but I leave you a rich God." Who would despair, when God declares his own treasury to be the possession of his children? Though not completely opened to them on earth, what more can they desire, while they have the assurance "that they shall be *satisfied* in the days of famine"? But the Psalmist seems to imply more than this. How often does it happen on earth that the righteous receives *more* than enough! Suppose we put the question, "Who spends more in alms and charities, the poor people of the godly, or the rich crowd of the ungodly?" we shall find that the small bag of the former, though continually drained, gets by secret influences from above, like the cruse of oil of the widow of Sarepta, ever filled anew. Does not this indicate that they are people who have access to the treasury of God? On the other hand how frequently does it happen that the rich ungodly, anxious to get still more—(for to gain much, much must be staked)—gets suddenly set fast in loss and debt, from which he cannot extricate himself. The experience of a whole life lay spread out before David, and he unhesitatingly affirms that he has never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his children reduced to penury. Is it possible to deny this truth?

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Especially if we look upon the righteous as one who conscientiously discharges the duties of his avocation, and shows in his life *mercy* and *charity*. Suppose that peculiar circumstances were to combine, and apparently forsaken of God and man, he were reduced to momentary want—he can nevermore become a beggar. Proverbs such as these, "He who does well will fare well," "Honesty needs not beg for bread," would never have arisen, if the words of the Psalmist did not contain a great truth. In brief, suppose mischief of every kind to combine and fall at once on a pious and devout man, it would indeed be strange if a true life before God and man should not secure true friends in the time of need, if he who has been to many a friend in need should not himself find a friend in need. So the Psalmist declares in verse 26, that the righteous has not only enough for himself and his children, but while the rich shut their hand, he has even enough for *strangers*.

V. 27—34. Meanwhile, he goes on to specify the virtues needed for genuine righteousness; they are these: the earnest striving to obey the will of God—wise thoughts and words—and the law of God written in the heart. Then let the wicked lie in ambush, or human judges pronounce sentence of death: the Lord will provide a way for escape!

V. 35—40. David had seen it so in *this* life, before the last day was come; with how much more security may he rely upon the *final issue* of things, especially since as children of the New Covenant we see with much greater clarity how that issue will terminate.

PSALM XXXVIII.

David deeply aggrieved, realizes before God the burden of his sufferings as the punishment of his sins, though he attests his innocence with regard to his enemies. "They that render me evil for good, are mine adversaries, because I follow the thing which is good," (v. 21.) But does not our conscience frequently disclose to us that our innocent sufferings from enemies are a just judgment of God? Appearances are here even stronger than in Psalm 6, that reference is made to suffering from disease, from sores and leprosy, (v. 8—12:)* so leprous Job said, "My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me." (Job xix. 14.) This latter expression, which occurs in verse 12, also occurs in Psalm

* Hetzel, Ewald, Krahmer, Köster; Jerome translates verse 12: Amici contra lepram meam steterunt.

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xxxi. 12, 13; lxix. 9; lxxxviii. 19, although there is no necessary reference to leprosy in those passages. It appears from Genesis iv. 23; Isa. i. 5, 6; liii. 3, that *disease*, *wounds*, and *sores*, were used to denote every kind of suffering and pain. It will therefore be more correct to seek the primary cause of this painful complaint in the fiery persecution, which, however, probably aided by some particular transgression, aroused David's sense of guilt and the thought of the Divine wrath. Lost in himself, the Psalmist complains in the first two strophes of the burden of his soul and body, but feels the wrath of God in his bodily and psychical pains, (v. 2—11.) He then looks around him: his friends leave him, his enemies daily devise new mischief; he suffers without remonstrating, for his hope is in the Lord, (v. 12—16.) He states to God his misery—on the one hand his awakened knowledge of himself, the voluptuous prosperity of his enemies, and their great wrong on the other, (v. 17—21,) and bases thereon his prayer for aid and deliverance.

1 A PSALM of David, to bring to remembrance.

2 O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath:
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
3 For thine arrows stick fast in me,
And thy hand presseth me sore.
4 *There is* no soundness in my flesh
Because of (or, "before") thine anger; neither *is there any* rest in my bones
Because of (or "before") my sin.
5 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head:
As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
6 My wounds stink *and* are corrupt.
Because of my foolishness.
7 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
8 For my loins are filled with burning:
And *there is* no soundness in my flesh.
9 I am feeble and sore broken:
I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.
10 Lord, all my desire *is* before thee;
And my groaning is not hid from thee.
11 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me:
As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.
12 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore;
And my kinsmen stand afar off.

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13 They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me:*
And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things,
And imagine deceits all the day long.
14 But I, as a deaf *man*, hear not;
And *I* am as a dumb man *that* openeth not his mouth.
15 Thus I am as a man that heareth not,
And in whose mouth *are* no reproofs (or "remonstrance.")
16 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope:
Thou wilt hear, O Lord, my God.
17 For I said, *Hear me*,
Lest *otherwise* they should rejoice over me!
Lest when my foot slippeth, they magnify *themselves* against me!
18 For I *am* ready to halt,
And my sorrow *is* continually before me.
19 For I declare mine iniquity;
I am sorry for my sin.
20 While mine enemies *are* alive,* *and* they are strong:
And they that hate me wrongfully, are multiplied.
21 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries;
Because I follow *the thing that* good *is*.
22 Forsake me not, O LORD:
O my God, be not far from me.
23 Make haste to help me,
O LORD my salvation.

V. 2—6. It is not uncommon that a strong sense of guilt is attendant upon afflictions, into which pious people are brought without any fault of their own. Stimulated by the thought that God must have his wise designs in sending them, we search for concealed guilt. Transgressions which until then had been unnoticed suddenly advance into prominent relief in the hour of suffering. More than this, *our deportment in affliction*, our impatient complaints, our fears and our shrinking from prayer, render us more familiar with the condition of our hearts than in days of prosperity. Our awakened consciences regard then every blow of the enemy as a scourging of God—every act of injustice of men as a sting of Divine justice—and every disease as an arrow sent from God. David probably remembered some particular transgression. Expressions of a sense of guilt accompanying suffering, occur also in Psalms vi. 2; xxv. 18; xxx. 8; xxxi. 11; xxxix. 9; xl. 13; cxliii. 2.

* Perhaps, but less probably, "They who hate me without cause are many."

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V. 7—11. He derives consolation in his affliction from the knowledge that his every complaint is well known to God. If that conviction is clearly apprehended, it yields of itself a rich consolation. For if the tempter succeeds in protracted suffering to persuade the soul that God is perfectly unconcerned about it, then we must regard such persuasion as a temptation of the fiercest kind.

V. 12—16. His friends have deserted him; even good-meaning people, as *e. g.* the inhabitants of Kegilah, (1 Sam. xxiii.) deemed it dangerous to hold any communion whatsoever with the exile. The inactivity on the part of our friends is generally accompanied, under such circumstances, by greater inveteracy on the part of enemies. Faith is much strengthened by stating all this to a God who declares it to be his peculiar office to aid the orphan and the forsaken. We are entitled to hope for the aid of the Lord, according as the accusations of our adversaries are unfounded, and every attempt of remonstrating against their obduracy and cunning is useless, and according as the sufferer, as does David, absolutely commits the justice of his cause to God as to his best advocate. (Cf. Isaiah liii. 7; 1 Peter ii. 23.) Experience confirms it, that if we have to deal with any crafty and embittered foes, resigned suffering is more likely to benefit than a zealous apprehension of our good cause. Suffering of this kind will finally disarm our adversaries, and cause the better-minded no longer to persist in inactivity.

V. 17—21. His enemies are exalted and rejoice, while he, hardly able to prevent a deep fall, mourns in humility and penitence to have by his own sins adduced such severe chastisements on the part of God. He prays therefore that should he succumb to their unheard-of attacks, they might not be permitted to triumph over him, as if the cause of the godly were entirely destroyed. Bearing in mind that the eye of the nation was fixed on David since many years, and all were waiting for the final issue of things, it is clear that his total defeat would be interpreted as a public signal that God had ceased to be king in Israel. To show more markedly the contrast between himself and his enemies, he states that so far from having by any fault of his own caused their animosity, they had, on the contrary, even stood proof of shame at the displays of his love to them. God hears the fervent prayers of his children for the *visible manifestation* of his attributes now as he ever did of old. But Christians should bear in mind of *what manner of spirit they are,* (Luke ix. 55,) that their faith, superior to that of the ancients, ought to soar above the things seen and temporal, to the things not seen and eternal.

V. 22, 23. He grounds his prayer for the assistance of God, on the magnitude of his own misery, and the ready acknowledgment of his guilt, as well as the hard-hearted arrogance and pride of his enemies, and confesses that his sole help is with God.

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PSALM XXXIX.

A PECULIAR psalm of complaint, containing the confession of desperate struggle of soul, which resolves itself into a mournful prayer. The Psalmist represents the fearful extent of his misery. Words of murmuring and accusation against God had arisen in his soul, but he had checked their eagerness to break forth. He would not for his own sufferings' sake have the name of God contemned, and therefore resolved to suppress the tumult of his soul, and to be silent, (v. 13.) But the commotion of his heart was too vehement. His depression burst forth once, and like Job he wished for the end of his life.

Now the agitated complaint changes into humble supplication. He is aware of the shortness of this sorrowful life: but that knowledge is no solid foundation for the anchor of hope. His hesitating soul regains the solid and well-known foundation in his God, (v. 6—8.) He will humbly hope for deliverance from the *Lord*. The Lord is sure to afford some joyous moments, just because the term of our sorrowful life is brief, (v. 9—14.)

1 TO the chief Musician of the Jeduthunites, A Psalm of David.
2 I said, "I will take heed to my ways,
That I sin not with my tongue:
I will keep my mouth with a bridle,
While the wicked is before me."
3 I was dumb with silence,
I held my peace *even* from good;
And my sorrow was stirred.
4 My heart was hot within me,
While I was musing the fire burned:
Then spake I with my tongue.
5 "LORD, make me to know mine end,
And the measure of my days, what it is;
That I may know what time I have here."
6 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth;*
And mine age *is* as nothing before thee:
Verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity.
Selah.
7 Surely every man walketh in a vain show:
Surely they are disquieted in vain:
He heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

* Properly, "Several spans."

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8 And now, Lord, what wait I for?
My hope *is* in thee.
9 Deliver me from all my transgressions:
Make me not the reproach of the foolish:
10 I will be dumb, I will not open my mouth:
For thou wilt do it (well.)
11 Remove thy stroke away from me:
I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.
12 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity,
Thou makest his beauty to consume away as by the moth:
Surely every man *is* vanity. Selah.
13 Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And give ear unto my cry;
Hold not thy peace at my tears:
For I *am* a stranger with thee,
And a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.
14 O spare me, that I may recover strength,
Before I go hence, and be no more.

V. 2, 3. How true and graphic is this description of inward struggle in hours of distress, when we have not faith enough to humble ourselves before God, and yet are not sufficiently unbelieving to deny him before his enemies. The heart will then not shrink from the contradiction, to maintain the honour of the Lord before others, and to deny it to ourselves. It is like a man who seeks to master a monster which he cannot kill, by kneeling on its back: its roaring has ceased, though not its panting and groaning.

V. 4, 5. It implied a greater extremity of despair in the case of the children of the Old Covenant than in ours (because they lacked our clear insight into the future,) to renounce earthly existence and to desire death. So Job exclaimed in his deepest wretchedness, "Oh, that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for: even that it would please God to destroy me: that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!" (Job vi. 8, 9.) And Elias, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." (1 Kings xix. 4.) And Jonah, "Therefore now, O Lord, I beseech thee, take my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah iv. 3.) The fear of the Lord has as yet prevented David from reaching that point of extremity to wish straightway for death: in his then state of mind he only asked to know when it should take place.

V. 6, 7. He no longer wishes for but complains of the nearness of death and the frailty of human life. Prosperity intoxicates men to a security, as if they had to live for ever, (Psalm xlix. 12;)

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so most men are, even in old age, anxious for after days—so does the covetousness of misers increase and not decrease with their years. When affliction enters, and now destroys this and that foundation of prosperity, the nothingness of human life gets soon apparent.

V. 8. Life is short indeed, and no sufferer needs to anticipate centuries of misery. If prosperity therefore is to come at all, it must come soon. Hence David indulges the hope, that the day of joy will dawn to him after his nights of sorrow. He depends not, after the manner of the worldly-minded, upon a caprice of the goddess of fortune or chance—but though in his depression he felt half inclined to forsake the Lord, he patiently returns to him, knowing that the destinies of man are lodged in his hand, to place his hope in him.

V. 9—12. His *challenge* of God is transmuted into *prayer*, the answer of which he means silently and trustfully to wait for. He acquaints God with his grief: he describes his beauty to have vanished by his stealthily consuming grief of the chastisement of God, like the beauty of a garment by the secret gnawing of a moth. This has taught him the frailty of man.

V. 13, 14. He seeks by this representation also to move the heart of God to mercy. Man traverses life like a pilgrim and a stranger, making but a short stay: the law has enjoined kindness to strangers. (Exod. xxii. 21; Lev. xix. 10.) It is said that "the Lord preserveth the strangers, he relieveth the fatherless and widow." (Psalm cxlvi. 9.) He asks whether he, a stranger of God on earth, (Job x. 2,) may not hope for seasons of joy and refreshing. Though those who know that this life is a time of discipline and probation for the next, are not surprised that the draught of our earthly cup is mixed of *bitter* herbs only, still it is to be remembered that God knows the weakness of the human mind—that we are dust and ashes—and that therefore it cannot be deemed a wrongful prayer to pray with David, that God would, by the infusion of a few *sweet* drops, render the bitter draught more palatable. "As all my fathers were," probably refers to the confessions of Abraham and Jacob. (Gen. xxiii. 4; xlvii. 9; Heb. xi. 13.) In similar terms David says (1 Chron. xxix. 14, 15,) after the humble confession, that the costly material, which he had procured for the building of the Temple, was really the property of *God*, "For we are strangers before thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."

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PSALM XL.

A PSALM like Psalm ix. simultaneously expressive of gratitude and complaint. Gratitude for deliverance is the leading sentiment; then follows the cry for help in view of impending dangers; and in verse 18 there ensues a final calm. The portion of the psalm which begins with verse 14, occurs in Psalm lxx. in a separate form. Situations such as this psalm presumes them, in which danger and persecution were still threatening after remarkable deliverances, constantly occurred in the life of David during this flight before Saul. He had scarcely retired from the town of Kegilah to the wilderness of Siph, before the Siphites send word to Saul: having afterwards escaped from Saul into the wilderness of Maon and fled to Engedi, Saul pursued him as far as there: having in the wilderness of Siph escaped from Saul a second time, he is so depressed at the snares and persecutions which compassed him on every hand, that weary of the unceasing chase and flight, he says, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines, and Saul shall despair of me to seek me any more in any coast of Israel, so shall I escape out of his hand." (1 Sam. xxvii. 1.)

With a solemn and grateful mind he praises the deliverance he has just experienced, (v. 2—5:) contemplating his manifold experience of the marvellous love of God, he ardently desires worthily to thank the Lord; and knowing that sacrifice of itself is not sufficient, he promises to render the sacrifice of himself, of his will, according to the requirements of the law, besides his cheerful testimony to the justice, goodness, and faithfulness of God in the congregation, (v. 6—11.) Now for the first time remembering the uncertain soil of the present, he sends up his fervent petitions (v. 13—17,) and concludes with a calmed mind, (v. 18.)

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

2 I waited patiently for the LORD;
And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
3 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my goings.
4 And he hath put a new song in my mouth,
Even praise unto our God:

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Many shall see *it*, and fear,
And shall trust in the LORD.
5 Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust,
And respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.
6 Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which* thou hast done,
And thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward:
Nothing can be compared unto thee (or "be made like:")
I would declare and speak *of them* but they are more than can be numbered.
7 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire;
Mine ears hast thou opened* (*i. e.* thou hast revealed it to me:)
Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.
8 Then said I, Lo, I come:†
In the volume of the book *it is* written of me,
9 I delight to do thy will, O my God:
Yea, thy law *is* within my heart.
10 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation:
Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.
11 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart;
I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation:
I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.
12 Withold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD:
Let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me.
13 For innumerable evils have compassed me about:
Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me,
So that I am not able to look up;
They are more than the hairs of mine head:
Therefore my heart forsaketh me.
14 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me:
O LORD, make haste to help me.

* *I. e.* The inward ear; another figure is, The awakening of the ear. (Isaiah l. 4.)

† אָז denotes here, *Succession* in time, (Jer. xxii. 15; Ps. lvi. 10.) בָּאתִי is explained by Kimchi, by supplying לְפָנֶיךָ, and that not in the temple only, (Ps. lxv. 3; lxxi. 16; xcv. 6.) Stier compares less happily בָּאתִי with Numb. xxii. 38; 2 Sam. xix. 21.

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15 Let them be ashamed and confounded together
That seek after my soul to destroy it;
Let them be be driven backward and put to shame
That wish me evil.
16 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame
That say unto me, Aha! aha!
17 Let all those that seek thee
Rejoice and be glad in thee:
Let such as love thy salvation
Say continually, "The LORD be magnified."
18 But I *am* poor and needy;
Yet the LORD thinketh upon me:
Thou *art* my help and my deliverer;
Make no tarrying, O my God.

V. 2—4. David describes his anguish and peril of life, by the figure of a man who, *e. g.* like Joseph or Jeremiah, having been thrown into a cistern, sinks deeper and deeper into the mire. (Cf. ad. Ps. lxix. 3.) When the Lord had stretched out his mighty hand to him, he felt like one who, delivered from such a perilous situation, has by some helping hand been set upon a rock. He projects to celebrate this new theme in new accents, and rejoices in the thought that his own experience should prove subservient to the piety of others.

V. 5. Those who are strongly attached to appearances are prone rather to cling to the mighty ones on earth whom they see, than to God whom they do not see. But while "He giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not," *they* are proud—while *He* is faithful, *they* deal in lies. How much better to trust in God than in man!

V. 6—9. This one experience opens to David the wonders of Divine mercy in general. Who can vividly realize them, without feeling constrained to proclaim them to a blinded world, that pass them day after day without seeing or hearing them? David is thus constrained, but is none of those who consider that words alone can do it. He not only knows the insufficiency of human speech in these matters, but is equally conscious that gratitude needs works as the concomitants of words. In his relation to God he is not satisfied with *those* works which suffice to the great mass of mankind. He has not forgotten the saying of Samuel, his fatherly friend, that "to obey is better than sacrifice," (1 Sam. xv. 22;) nor received it on human authority, but the Spirit of God has confirmed it to his mind. Whatever name the different kinds of sacrifice may bear, he knows that they are the symbols of the self-sacrifice of man. Man offers them with an obscure feeling that the sacrifice of his will is as yet incomplete. On that account David testifies

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before the Lord, that he has sacrificed his own will and adopted the Divine as his, and that the law of God is for him not only inscribed upon the tables of stone, but written upon his heart. But, it is asked, how can David say so, since he immediately after declares that "his iniquities are more than the hairs on his head"? The Spirit of God, we answer, had certainly put these sublime words into the mouth of David, which in their fullest sense, however, could only be uttered by the Son of God, who said, "I seek the will of my Father," and, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." Just at that moment, when he had soared aloft in prayer, the expression may have been true of David (for imperfect man may bring such sacrifices of self in his *prayers;*) but in his *life* it was a truth of only gradual development. Christ, however, who became man to lay down his life for man by the perfect resignation of his will, could in the fullest sense say, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a *body* hast thou prepared me," (Heb. x. 5,) *i. e.* for sacrifice—for he made a sacrifice to God of the life he lived in the body, and of the body itself.

V. 10, 11. Gratitude is to be an act; but who that experiences gratitude can repress the *words?* Though the wonders of Divine mercy cannot be numbered, should we not count as many as we are able? So David deems it his duty to preach to the godly, that the mercy of God, which has yielded so much fruit to him, may likewise yield fruit to others.

V. 12, 13. While speaking of the past love and faithfulness of God, he is reminded of the present and the immediate future before him, and feels how little he can spare the continuance of that love and faithfulness. He has formed lofty views of the duties of the godly, and expressed his heart's desire that his own will should be absorbed by that of God; but this only causes him to pass a more severe sentence on his past life, to recognize the hand of a just God in his sufferings, however undeserved they might appear to human eyes, and to measure the number of his offences by the number of his sufferings. These expressions furnish the clue, why afflictions, which less conscientious men could have better borne than David, so completely prostrated him.

V. 14—18. With a humble and contrite heart he now cries for help, and summoning his adversaries before the Divine judgment-seat, enumerates the proofs of their inhuman disposition: they aim at his life, rejoice at his tears, and every new disaster which befalls him. On the other hand, he infers from his past experiences the exultation to which his own deliverance would give rise among the children of God, confesses the Lord as his all-sufficient help, and prays, weakened by the endless chain of affliction, for the speedy forthcoming of that help.

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PSALM XLI.

A PLAINTIVE psalm composed in sickness, which was attended by the haughtiness of enemies and the faithlessness of friends. It cannot well fall into the period of David's reign, because it is improbable that such potent adversaries should have surrounded the king, or if they had, he would no doubt from the sick-bed have concerted means to check their malice. It is therefore better to refer it to the period of his residence at the court of Saul. We know that he was there surrounded by crafty men, who in every way sought to calumniate him with the king, (v. 7.) It is by no means improbable that his friends and associates dealt with him in a hostile manner, though there is no historic record to that effect. Psalm lxix. refers to similar circumstances, (cf. verse 21.)

The Psalmist, conscious of his desertion, promises the reward of blessing to those who will espouse the cause of the afflicted in their time of calamity, (v. 2—4:) previous to presenting his petition to the Lord, he confesses his readiness to regard his disease as a well-merited chastisement, (v. 5:) he complains of the cunning of enemies, that his friends cannot be depended upon, (v. 6—10,) and prays for health for the purpose of punishing the faithless, and of knowing thereby that the Lord has not wholly cast him off, (v. 11—13.)

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

2 Blessed *is* he that considereth the poor:
The LORD will deliver him in the day of evil.
3 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive;
And he shall be blessed upon the earth:
And thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.
4 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing:
Thou wilt turn all his bed in his sickness.
5 I said, LORD, be merciful unto me:
Heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.
6 Mine enemies speak evil of me,
"When shall he die, and his name perish?"
7 And if they come to see *me*, they speak vanity (or, "falsehood":)
Their heart gathereth iniquity,
They go abroad and tell it.
8 All that hate me whisper together against me:
Against me do they devise my hurt.

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9 "An evil disease," *say they*, "cleaveth fast unto him:
And *now* that he lieth he shall rise up no more."
10 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread,
Hath lifted up *his* heel against me.
11 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me,
And raise me up, that I may requite them.
12 By this I know that thou favourest me,
That mine enemy shall not triumph over me.
13 But as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity,
And settest me before thy face for ever.

Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

V. 2—10. The kind of recompense which the Psalmist expressed in verse 4, shows that he understands by the poor, one afflicted with disease. He prefaces his petition with the confession of his guilt, because the lenity of the judgment of God is proportionate to the severity with which we judge ourselves. By his enemies we have to understand such courtiers as disliked David, partly on account of his piety, partly on account of the high position he held at court. They cannot, without a breach of etiquette, omit to visit him in the sick-chamber, but they partly contort his sayings to calumniate him with the king, and partly rejoice at his sufferings. The expression "to lift up the heel," which David says of his friend, is equivalent to "to strike out (kick) against one," (Gen. xlix. 17,) and denotes cunning insolence. Our Lord's (John xiii. 18) applying this passage to Judas, must be taken in a typical sense; and it may be worth noticing that our Saviour omits the words, "*in whom I trusted.*"

V. 11—13. The words, "that I may requite them," seem to express personal vindictive desires, and to contradict the sentiment of Psalm xxxv. 13. Most interpreters regard the Psalmist as speaking in his capacity of king, and contemplating as such the exercise of legal punishment. But was it necessary that he should for that purpose wait for the restoration of his health? Personal vindictive feeling can hardly be denied; but all depends upon the kind of recompense which he desired. He may have simply meant to say that he intended to part with his faithless friend, and to cause the king or other influential persons to punish his cunning enemies, which would be a degree of revenge by no means unpardonable. Looking upon his sickness as a Divine chastisement, he determines to regard his recovery as an evidence of the continued favour of God. The doxology which occurs at the end of this Psalm was added by transcribers, who thus concluded the first book of the Psalms. (Cf. Psalms lxxii. lxxxix. cvi.)

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PSALMS XLII. XLIII.

THESE two psalms of complaint make up, as show the recurring verses xlii. 6. 12, xliii. 5, one whole. The voice of longing for the sanctuary at Jerusalem is heard in the regions of Lebanon. To infer from the title, the exile seems to be a Korahite Levite. Similar yearnings occur in Psalms lxi. lxiii. lxxxiv. Psalm lxxxiv. notices the striking circumstance that the banished Korahite, who longs for the sanctuary, shares the exile of a king, and expresses his anxiety to return conjointly *with* the king, and *quasi* in the soul of that king. Psalm lxxxiv. applies to no other king than to David on his flight before Absalom (Cf. ad. Ps. lxxxiv.) beyond Jordan: this favours the presumption that the mourning Levite of this Psalm sang on the same occasion in the soul of the aggrieved king. 2 Sam. xv. 24, states that Levites accompanied David on his flight: the ark of the covenant which they bore was certainly by order of the king taken back to the city, but it does not follow from that circumstance that all the Levites returned. It would be difficult to state another occasion when a Levite was exiled just in the region beyond Jordan,* while the description of the locality agrees with David's residence at Mahanaim. David's longing for the sanctuary is known from 2 Sam. xv. 25, and other Psalms. (Cf. ad. Ps. lxxxiv.) While the Psalm begins with a deep sense of yearning for the place where the bard had enjoyed rich communings with God, rebellious enemies mockingly tell him that his God has forsaken him, (v. 2—4.) He comforts himself to some extent by the recollection of the former beautiful seasons of worship (v. 5,) and soothes his moved soul with the firm belief that help is sure to come, (v. 6.) Scarcely soothed, grief bursts forth anew: the land of his exile, the perpetual rushing of the mountain streams, furnish a figure of his great grief. But since the Lord daily and hourly provides to his people opportunities of praise, the Psalmist directs his plaintive cries unto him, and by the exercise of faith succeeds once more to appease his troubled heart, (v. 9—12.) But his grief rises a third time, and streams forth in loud cries for help, until the same refrain brings for the third time peace to his mind. (Ps. xliii. 1—5.)

(PSALM xlii.)

1 TO the chief Musician, and instruction of the Sons of Korah.†
2 As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.

* According to Ewald, the Psalmist was, *on the transport to Babylon*, detained for a night in the vicinity of Hermon. (?)

† Cf. ad. Ps. xxxii. 1. Perhaps with reference to practical wisdom of life. (Cf. מַשְׂכִּיל Jos. i. 8.)

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8 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before God.
4 My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they continually say unto me, "Where *is* thy God?"
5 When I remember these *things*, I pour out my soul in me:
How I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise,
With a multitude that keep holyday.
6 WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN, O MY SOUL?
AND WHY ART THOU DISQUIETED IN ME?
HOPE THOU IN GOD: FOR I SHALL YET PRAISE HIM,
WHO IS THE HEALTH OF MY COUNTENANCE, AND MY GOD.
7 My soul is cast down within me:
Whilst I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and from the mountains of Hermon,
From the little hill.
8 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts;
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
9 *Yet* the LORD will command his loving-kindness in the daytime,
And in the night his song *shall be* with me,
And my prayer unto the God of my life.†
10 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
11 *As* with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;
While they say daily unto me, "Where *is* thy God?"
12 WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN, O MY SOUL?
AND WHY ART THOU DISQUIETED WITHIN ME?
HOPE THOU IN GOD: FOR I SHALL YET PRAISE HIM,
WHO IS THE HEALTH OF MY COUNTENANCE, AND MY GOD.

(PSALM xliii.)

1 JUDGE me, O God, and plead my cause
Against an ungodly nation:
O deliver me from deceitful and unjust men.

† Should the transition from the complaint in v. 8 appear too sudden, interpret: "The day will bring help, and at night I shall be able to give thanks." (Cf. Ps. lxvi. 17.) "I cried unto him with my mouth, and now I extol him with my tongue." This interpretation regards תְּפִלָּה as a prayer of thanksgiving.

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2 For thou *art* the God of my strength:
Why dost thou cast me off?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
3 O send out thy light and thy truth:
Let them lead me;
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.
4 Then will I go unto the altar of God,
Unto God my exceeding joy:
And upon the harp will I praise thee,
O God, my God.
5 WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN, O MY SOUL?
AND WHY ART THOU DISQUIETED WITHIN ME?
HOPE IN GOD: FOR I SHALL YET PRAISE HIM,
WHO IS THE HEALTH OF MY COUNTENANCE, AND MY GOD.

(PSALM xlii.)

V. 2—4. The outward sanctuary was the tie which united the godly and their God: there they enjoyed the happiest hours in holy communion with him. Hence this strong yearning for the sanctuary. The Psalmist compares the complaints of his longing to the panting of a thirsty hart; so incessant is the flow of his tears, that his bread is steeped in them. Mockers sneer at his king's trust in God, whose cause he has identified with his own.

V. 5, 6. The present being painful, and the future uncertain, his troubled mind reverts to the *past*, and he enjoys once more in memory the delights of the communion of the children of God before his countenance. That retrospect elicits tears, but they are at once expressive of grief and joy. The realization of the past mercy of God, accompanied by the thought of his unchanging character, gives rise to hope for the future, and he gains a sufficient amount of strength to address and comfort his soul.

V. 7, 8. The grief of a deeply afflicted soul is like a wave of the sea, which now sinks, but immediately lifts itself again. So grief returns on his beholding the place of his exile.* It was in

* The name, "The land of Jordan," is used not to designate the source of Jordan, but because Canaan proper did not extend beyond Jordan, (v. Reland's Palestine, p. 4.) This name denotes therefore the exile remote from Canaan. The Hermon of the ancients is, according to Seezen, the same as the modern Heish mountains. On Robinson's map Mahanaim is certainly some miles distant from the Heish mountains, in the mountains of Gilead; but Lebanon, Hermon, and Gilead form a connected chain, or may at least be regarded as such, as appears from Bochard's testimony quoted in Bachiene's description of Palestine, vol. i. 1, § 126. The use of the plural חֶרְמֹנִים shows indeed that Hermon in a wide and not in the narrow sense is meant.

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the mountains of Gilead, beyond the frontiers of Canaan—a country rich in natural wonders. But what are the beauties of nature to a soul that is conscious of being exiled from the sanctuary of God? Beauteous nature round about, with its mountain streams, where one gush of water seems uproariously to call for the next, is to him a figure of the billows of adversity, which had gone over him. The most beautiful scenery appears to a saddened heart as clad in mourning apparel, while a simple pasture may tune a gladdened one to exultant joy.

V. 9—12. Those who are rich in past experience possess in it an eminence from which they may also enjoy genial prospects of the future. Strengthened by the contemplation of the past, he acquaints God, who had so often proved himself to be his rock, with his grief, and above all with his great sorrow, harder to bear than death itself, that his enemies deride his faith, and for the second time he allays the tumult of his mind.

(PSALM XLIII.)

V. 1—5. Soliloquy has ceased; he invokes Divine aid in a state of mind which almost borders on despair. Neither transient enjoyment nor temporal good, but the delights of worship and the praise of God, which sounds so feebly at a distance from the accustomed sanctuary, occasion his painful yearnings for Zion. Having thus committed his cause to the Lord, he succeeds for the last time to appease his troubled soul.

PSALM XLIV.

A SONG of complaint, which probably belongs to the period when Nebuchadnezzar carried away Jehoiachin the king and thirty-two noble Israelites into captivity. Many commentators have explained v. 10—17 and v. 20 as descriptive of the condition of the Jews in exile; this view is not correct, for v. 6—8 seems to point to the hope of victory; nothing is said about the destruction of the sanctuary, and the people were then far from regarding the judgments of God as unmerited on their part, which they were called upon to endure for the sake of God, as v. 21—23 state. Many expressions in books, which originated in the exile, prove the contrary, (Ezra ix. 7. 13; Neh. i. 6; ix. 30. 33; xiii. 18; Lam. i. 8. 18. 22; iv. 6. 13—15; v. 16; Dan. ix. 4, *etc.*;) expressions differing from those employed here occur also in Psalms lxxix. 6; lxxxv. 3. The two characteristics of this psalm are the captivity and the deep

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humiliation of the people, and the consciousness that idolatry was not the cause of their sore trial. For on an inspection of the epoch from Josiah to the captivity, with a view to find the time when the king and the nation were not addicted to idolatry, and yet visited with great calamities and captivity, it appears there is none, except that of the carrying away of king Jehoiachin. Several prisoners had been carried to Babylon during the reign of Jehoiakim, (Dan. i. 3, *etc*,) but they were few. (Cf. Introd. to Ps. lxxiv.) Verses 12—17 apply to the days of Jehoiachin or Zedekiah only. It cannot fall under the government of the latter (*e. g.* the period when Jerusalem was besieged by the generals of Nebuchadnezzar,) because the nobility and priests were then guilty of gross idolatry, which was committed in the temple itself, (Ezra viii.; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14; see Introd. to Psalm lxxiv.) and because Jeremiah expressly states that the destruction of the city took place for idolatry's sake. (Jer. xxii. 9.) Though (2 Chron. xxxvi. 9,) it is stated that Jehoiachin, during the three months of his government, "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," it is apparent from the description in Jer. xxii. 10, *etc.* of the kings after Josiah, that the youthful king Jehoiachin, mourned for by many, had, in accordance with the immutable counsel of God, to suffer for the sins of the nation. Nothing else is mentioned of Shallum, the son of Josiah, who immediately after his accession to the throne was by Necho in his early youth taken a captive to Egypt. Of Jehoiakim who in his pride built lofty palaces, extorted the people, shed innocent blood, and oppressed the land, it is said, "They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, my brother! or, Ah, my sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, lord! or, Ah, his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem." But concerning Jehoiachin, (or Coniah,) the people lament: "Is this man a despised, broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? Now idolatry had ceased already in the days of Jehoiakim, and it is said, (2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4,) that he was delivered into the hands of his enemies for the sins of idolatrous Manasseh. How natural therefore was it for a pious man during the reign of innocent Jehoiachin to say that affliction had come upon them not on account of their iniquities!

At a time when the land was laid desolate by the devastations of the foe, (v. 20,) while the foe was still in its borders, (v. 17,) much people destroyed by him, and Israel deeply humiliated, (v. 12—17,) the thoughts of the Levite singer revert to the ancient works of God, to the period when the Lord was still favouring his people, (v. 2—4;) he consoles himself by remembering that the same God is still King, and able to give victory to those who rely not on their own strength, but confide in his

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strong arm, (v. 5—9.) He successively contemplates the shame which the Lord has suffered to come upon his people; he thinks of their routed armies, of their ignominious captivity, of the foe in their borders, (v. 10—17,) and all this (which the Lord had threatened as their punishment if they forsook him, Deut. iv. 25—27; xxviii. 37,) now at a time when the nation clings close to her God, (v. 18—23.) He then cries, almost despairingly, for help, (v. 24,) but concludes with a humble prayer for mercy, (v. 25.)

1 TO the Chief Musician, A Poem of the sons of Korah.

2 We have heard with our ears, O God,
Our fathers have told us,
What work thou didst in their days,
In the times of old.
3 *How* thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand,
But plantedst them;
How thou didst afflict the nations,
But extendedst them.
4 For they got not the land in possession by their own sword,
Neither did their own arm save them:
But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance,
Because thou hadst a favour unto them.
5 O God, thou art he, my king!
Command deliverances for Jacob!
6 Through thee will we push down our enemies:
Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.
7 For I will not trust in my bow,
Neither can my sword save me.
8 But thou hast saved us from our enemies,
And hast put them to shame that hated us.
9 In God we boast all the day long,
And praise thy name for ever. Selah.
10 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame;
And didst not go forth with our armies.
11 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy;
And they which hate us spoil for themselves.
12 Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat;
And hast scattered us among the heathen.
13 Thou sellest thy people for nought,
And dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price.

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14 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.
15 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen,
A shaking of the head among the nations.
16 My confusion *is* continually before me,
And the shame of my face hath covered me,
17 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth;
By reason of the enemy and the vengeful.
18 All this is come upon us:
Yet have we not forgotten thee,
Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.
19 Our heart is not turned back,
Neither have our steps declined from thy way;
20 Though thou hast sore broken us in the land of jackals,
And covered us with the shadow of death.
21 If we have forgotten the name of our God,
Or stretched out our hands to a strange god;
22 Shall not God search this out?
For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.
23 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
24 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?
Arise, cast *us* not off for ever.
25 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And forgettest our affliction and our oppression?
26 For our soul is bowed down to the dust:
Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
27 Arise for our help,
And redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

V. 2. "Hath not the Lord made thee and established thee? Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee." Thus saith the Lord in Deut. xxxii. 6, 7, *etc.* and goes on to remind his people how he had, with the affection of a father, established, led, and guarded them of old. The Psalmist obeys this Divine commandment in causing his memory to go back to the days of the beginning of his nation. It was the admirable occupation of old men in Israel, to immortalize the works of the Lord in the nation, that the remembrance might in a continuous chain go from century to century. (Psalm lxxviii. 3—6.) The Psalmist refers God's merciful dealings in hoary antiquity to the uninterrupted testimony as transmitted from one generation to the next,

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and thereby intimates that the antiquity of their occurrence does not in any way impair their certainty and credibility. Other nations hand down to future generations the great events of antiquity in songs and histories—but while their songs sing of the heroism of their ancestors, the songs of Israel celebrate the works of *God*.

V. 3, 4. The Lord had found the nation "in a desert land and in the waste howling wilderness, as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him." (Deut. xxxii. 10, 11.) He had destroyed nations that were rooted in their native soil, and established his people in their borders and multiplied them. Israel had to fight for the possession of those new borders. But faith knows that the strength in man is not his, but the Lord's, who has created heaven and earth. The Psalmist therefore confesses that it was the hand of God which brought those mighty feats to pass.

V. 5—9. This *self-same* God is still the King. How encouraging a thought, and is there any other way in which a nation can attain to unwavering trust? Human strength and wisdom change with the generations, but the *Lord's* arm is the same in every century. If a nation desires to share his mercy and his might, she must ascribe the honour to him alone. Though Israel had ceased from idolatry since the days of godly Josiah, the Lord had need in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim to say to Jeremiah, "Stand in the courts of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word: if so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil ways, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings." (Jer. xxvi. 2, 3.)

V. 10—15. Victory had departed from the arms of Israel since the godly Josiah's defeat in the battle of Megiddoh: the arms of Jehoiakim gave way in the wars against Nebuchadnezzar, Moab, and Ammon, (2 Kings xxiv. 2;) and when the Chaldeans besieged Jerusalem, in the days of Jehoiachin, it fell almost without a blow. Nebuchadnezzar, covered with rich spoil, appeared for the second, perhaps the third (Cf. Introd. to Ps. lxxiv.) time before Jerusalem, and carried off many nobles, *e. g.* Daniel and Ezekiel, and many costly vessels from the temple (Dan. i. 2; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10) of the Lord. There is no need for explaining the dispersion among hostile nations of the abduction of captives to Babylon, since it was customary in the wars of that time to carry captives into foreign countries, and to sell them as slaves. Joel *e. g.* accuses the commercial nation of the Philistines of having sold the children (Joel iv. 6) of Jerusalem to the remote Greeks of Asia Minor, and Amos the Syrian of having sold the captives to the Edomites. (Amos i. 6.)

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But the deep humiliation of Israel before all the surrounding nations which is here mentioned, and which fulfilled the prediction of Deut. xxviii. 37, refers certainly to the abduction of a great portion of the nation to Babylon. The disasters and calamities of Israel were the rejoicing of all the surrounding nations, the Edomites, Ammonites, *etc.;* and when Nebuchadnezzar afterwards destroyed the city, Edom aided him, and exclaimed with malicious joy, "Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof." (Psalm cxxxvii. 7.) The shaking of the head denotes here, as in Psalm xxii. 8, derisive joy.

V. 16, 17. The Psalmist still hears the voice of the enemy, (Ps. lxxiv. 23,) and feels the ignominy of his people more deeply than his own. His eye has not only to behold the *destruction*, but the derision in the face of the *destroyer*.

V. 18. The Lord says (Deut. iv. 23, 24,) "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of anything which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee: for the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God:" adding, "Ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed; and the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be less few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you." The heart of the Psalmist is seized by that most dangerous of temptations, that the word of God is no longer consistent, for he affirms of his nation and himself, "that they have not dealt falsely in his covenant." But, as is always the case when man thinks that God has become faithless to his covenant, so here the Psalmist had neither *wholly* nor *deeply* understood the word of God. Let man but grasp it in its *depth* and *fulness*, and it will never contradict itself. Idolatry was not the only violation of the covenant, though none other is mentioned there. The Lord says, in Deut. xxviii. 15. 32. 37, "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, *to observe to do all the commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day*, that all their curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee. Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations, whither the Lord shall lead thee. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look and fail with longing for them all the day long; and there shall be no might in thy hand." Is this not the sense in which the keeping of the covenant is explained in Ps. l.? Is not all sin, in its deeper sense, idolatry? But we are always more prone to accuse God of faithlessness than our own hearts.

V. 19—23. The bard ventures to affirm that they have not declined from the ways of God, while the sequel of his words shows that all he means to say amounts just to this: that the nation as a whole stretched out their hands to the true God, and had the

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statutes and the covenant of the Lord in their mouths. But what if God dealt with the people according to the words of Psalm l. 16, 17, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?" It appears that the Psalmist was in his own mind not quite sure of the innocence of his people, for he speaks as if he were afraid of the just accusations, that though having done away with outward idolatry, they were attached to their idols in their hearts, as Ezekiel reproves those "whose hearts cling to their idols." How much is needed for a whole nation to affirm, as does the Psalmist here, that they endure their suffering, not on account of their own guilt, but solely for the sake of their God and their faith, which Paul was permitted to say of the Christians, (Rom. viii. 36.) The Psalmist calls his country the land of jackals and of the shadow of death, to intimate its deserted condition, for the desert is the haunting-place of jackals.

V. 24—27. Though the heart of believers cannot but retain the conviction that an active God wields the sceptre of the universe, expressions of despair in time of great temptation pass even their lips, to challenge as it were the manifestation of the Divine arm. But the wild waves soon subside in the mind of the bard, his sole appeals being to his own *affliction* and to the *love and mercy* of God.

PSALM XLV.

An exquisitely beautiful and poetic psalm, which were it found elsewhere than in the collection of the sacred songs of Israel, might be regarded as the nuptial song of an earthly king, whose bride is exhorted to forget her father's house and to yield herself entirely to her spouse and lord. The allegorical sense of this poem is rendered highly probable, from the simple consideration that a secular song of such a nature would not have been received into a collection of sacred songs.* John the Baptist calls our Lord Jesus the

* There are various objections to the allegorical interpretation of this psalm, but grave difficulties attach also to the explanations which regard the king as a worldly monarch of Persia, or Israel, or as Solomon. To regard him as a king of Persia (Augusti, Rosenmüller, and formerly De Wette) is prohibited by the following considerations:—Other tributary nations besides Tyre would be mentioned: and Israelites would not have praised him in similar epithets; nor would the position of the psalm occur among such ancient songs. It is objected to its application to a king of

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Bridegroom, and the people of Israel his bride. (John iii. 29.) Our Lord himself describes his union to his people by the figure of a marriage feast. (Matt. xxii. 2; cf. 2 Cor. xi. 2; Rev. xxix. 7.) After the same manner this psalm represents Messiah as a king, Israel as his affianced bride and queen, and pagan nations as her associates or friends, who along with her are introduced into the palace. The prophets (Isa. xi.; Mich. v. 3,) describe Messiah as a victorious king of righteousness, wisdom and kindness. Israel shall be the trunk-nation of the new kingdom, and the heathen be received into Israel, believing in the Messiah. This is stated in different figures. (Isaiah ii. 3.) It is described in another form Ezek. viii. 23, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." The spiritual union of God to his people is frequently represented by the figure of a marriage. (Hos. 2; Jer. iii. 1, *etc.;*

Israel (Ewald, Hitzig,) that Tyre would not have paid tribute to so unimportant a kingdom as Israel (for מִנְחָה must be regarded as *tribute* see Ps. lxxii. 10; Isaiah lx. 6;) that foreign kings would not have sent their daughters into the harem of such a king; that v. 17 could not apply to him; and that an Israelitish song of such a nature would not have been received into the Jewish canon. Its application to Solomon (Calvin, Grotius, Hupfeld) has against it that v. 5 ascribes a martial character to the king; that v. 17 speaks of a series of ancestors, while Solomon's sole ancestor was David. Its application to a later monarch of Judah, which is defended by Bleek (Commentary to the Hebrews, vol. ii. p. 154,) seems most admissible, though it must be confessed that the flattery—"Thou shalt make thy sons princes in all the earth," or, "in all the land," would be too strong if addressed to a later Jewish king, the lord of a country the dimensions of which were fifty miles by thirty. (See Introd. § iii.) It is, moreover, very questionable whether the contents of the psalm agree with such an hypothesis. Firstly, the proper object of praise is the king in general, v. 18, and the wedding is only described because in connection with him, while the bride is quieted by a reference to his glory. Secondly, much depends upon the correctness of the common view, which regards the virgins who follow the queen as her friends, introduced for the completion of the picture. But the bride is not comforted by a reference to that retinue, it being expressly stated that the virgins are brought unto *him, the king*, which is rendered more emphatic still by v. 17. The word תּוֹבֵל is, in fact, applied both to the queen and her companions. Verse 10 also alludes to such an equalization. We think that a careful consideration of the additional מוּבָאוֹת in v. 15, and of v. 16, necessarily leads to the conclusion to regard the virgins as brides, among whom the שַׁגָּל is *prima inter pares*. If this be the case, the application of the psalm to a worldly monarch is inadmissible. Among the different translations of שִׁיר יְדִידוֹת in the title, that which renders, "A song concerning the beloved," seems most preferable on grounds of language and of matter, which, after what has been adduced, seems best to agree with the contents of the psalm.

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Isa. liv. 5. Cf. Song of Solomon and Introd. §§ 4, 5.) Compare especially Ezek. xvi. where Israel is described as a virgin of Canaanite extraction, poor at her birth, whom the Lord educated, bathed, anointed, and adorned with broidered garments and costly jewels, but who had become unfaithful to him. The Psalmist declares in an enraptured state of mind his intention to sing a song to his king, (v. 2.) He praises his beauty and chivalry, his victorious warfares in the interest of truth and holy love: he affirms righteousness to be the fundamental part of his government, and depicts his majesty in figures borrowed from worldly monarchs, one of which is his riches in wives, (v. 3—10.) Eastern potentates have one favourite wife, who is styled the queen: the nation to whom belong the promises occupies her place, and is according to a wife's duty to forget her father's house and her former connections, and shall by way of reward receive tribute from the wealthiest nations of the earth. This wife, with the retinue of all other nations of the earth, holds a glorious entrance into the royal palace. The offspring of that union shall be princes all over the earth, more glorious than all the royal offspring of David, (v. 11—17.) That king is worthy of eternal praises, and the nations shall praise him for ever and ever for his greatness and his love, (v. 18.)

1 TO the chief Musician, to the tune "The lilies," a Song
of the sons of Korah concerning the beloved, an
instruction.*
2 My heart welleth forth a fair song:
I say: I will sing touching the king:
My tongue *is* as the pen of a ready writer.
3 Thou art fairer than the children of men:
Grace is poured into thy lips:
Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.
4 Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *Most* Mighty,
With thy glory and thy majesty.
5 And in thy majesty ride prosperously
Because of truth, and mercy,† *and* righteousness;
And thy right hand shall teach thee marvellous things.
6 Thine arrows hit sharp into the heart of the king's
enemies;
While the people fall under thee.

* So Gesenius in Thes. otherwise the rendering "Song of loves," would be more preferable.

† צֶדֶק and עֲנָוָה occur equally conjoined Zeph. ii. 3. These two asyndetically united words make up one idea, like two asyndetically united adjectives (cf. Ewald's Hebrew Grammar, 8d Edition, § 538.)

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7 Thy throne,* O God, *is* for ever and ever:
The sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a sceptre of justice.
8 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness:
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
9 All thy garments *smell* of myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia,
Out of ivory palaces the sound of the harp maketh thee glad.
10 Kings' daughters are among thy glories,
Upon thy right hand standeth the queen in gold of Ophir.
11 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;
Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;
12 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty:
For he *is* thy Lord, and thou shalt worship him.
13 And the daughter of Tyre *shall* with a gift entreat thy favour,
The richest among the nations.
14 The king's daughter entereth all gloriously:
Her clothing *is* of wrought gold.
15 She is brought unto the king in raiment of embroidery:
The virgins her companions that follow her †
Are brought unto thee.
16 With gladness and rejoicing are they brought unto thee:
They enter into the king's palace.
17 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,
Whom thou shalt make princes in all the earth.
18 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations:
Therefore shall the nations praise thee for ever and ever.

V. 2. The words of the poet well from a joyous and deeply-moved mind. The thought that he is about to devote his pen to the praise of his king inspires him with sublime enthusiasm. So rapid is the pulsation of his heart, that the pen of the tongue knows hardly to keep pace with the emotions of his heart.

V. 3—5. The bard seems already inclined to describe his king as a bridegroom; he therefore praises his beauty. His beauty flows from the possession of spiritual riches: it consists in the gracefulness of the words of his lips, which *God* has given to him. The

* The text will also admit the rendering, "Thy throne is a throne of God." Aben Ezra compares 2 Chron. xv. 8. The instances which Ewald (§ 547) adduces are not to the point. Gesenius quotes (§ 141) Song of Sol. i. 15, which is most admissible, though the passage is also susceptible of another grammatical structure.

† Germ. version renders "playmates." Equally correct is "friends."

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prophet represents Messiah's victory over the world by the figure of a warfare—and mentions on that account the brave sword of his royal hero. Truth and mercy blended with righteousness are the object for which he fights. *His* enemies are the enemies of righteousness and mercy—they are struck to the heart by his never-missing arrows.

V. 6—8. This Divine throne is perpetual, because justice is the sceptre of this kingdom. Since all other sceptres are but weak representations of this sceptre, righteousness and justice are possessed by them in an imperfect manner only: the Lord has therefore anointed this king with the oil of gladness more than any other. *He* is indeed the *joy of his people.*

V. 9, 10. As the king passes along, his full garments emit the richest and most delightful odours, (Cant. i. 3:) he is gladdened by lovely songs. Among his riches are his wives: among these only one is "his dove," (Cant. vi. 7, 8,) and hers is the prerogative, arrayed in gold, to stand to his right.

V. 11—13. The words which were of old addressed to woman, (Gen. ii. 24; Comp. xii. 1,) are in a spiritual sense enjoined upon this bride. The *Lord*, whose jealous love for man will not endure another beside him, can only favour her with his love on her forsaking home and natural ties—for not only his love but his right entitle him to that demand. Who would refuse to bring this sacrifice, that is alive to what he shall gain in lieu? As the prophet promises to the new Jerusalem, the people of which shall be all righteous, (Isa. lx. 21,) all the riches of the earth as her possession—all the flocks of Kedar, all the gold and incense of Sheba, (Isa. lx. 6, 7,) and as Solomon declares, that the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents, and the kings of Sheba offer gifts to Messiah, (Psalm lxxii. 10,) so the Psalmist promises to the wife, who has entered *this* covenant, the gifts of the richest of nations. (Ez. xxvii.)

V. 14—16. As Isaiah beheld in his rapturous ecstasy the flowing together, (Isaiah lx. 8, 9,) of all the nations of the earth with all their possessions—so the Psalmist sees the entrance of these wives into the regal palace to the great marriage feast—gloriously adorned, for the Lord has provided their wedding garments, (Matt. xxii. 12,) in joy and delight, for they who have enjoyment like this, need none other. Foremost in the procession is Israel, the good olive tree chosen from the beginning, into which all who wish to belong to the kingdom of God must be grafted, (Rom. xi. 17;) but the following friends are led to the same delights—they also are *brought* as wives unto the king, who is anointed with the oil of gladness.

V. 17. The new connection is also glorious to the king. Many were his glorious and royal ancestors down to Jesse, but now there are born to him the eternal kings, sons as the dew from the womb of the morning, (Ps. cx. 3; cf. also Isa. liii. 10,) who shall, as princes,

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occupy the thrones of the world. So our Lord promised to his disciples: "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration (of all things,) when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," (Matt. xix. 28.) And Paul says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. vi. 2.)*

V. 18. The glory of the king is the proper theme of the song. Seized with a sense of grateful homage, the Psalmist translates himself down to the remotest future, to join through remote generations the praises of the nations of the earth to the Lord, who hath done such great things for *them*.

PSALM XLVI.

Since the separation of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, the holy city had become several times the prey of heathen enemies, Shishak, king of Egypt, marched against the city as early as in the fifth year of Rehoboam, and carried off the treasures of the king. Edom and Philistia had joined him, and the children of Judah were sold to the remote Greek Asia Minor. Joel mourns over the plunder of the treasures of the Temple, (Joel iv. 5,) and the sale of the children of Judah, (Joel iv. 16, 17, 18. 21.) The king of Assyria threatened from the north with similar destruction in the days of Hezekiah. Desire of conquest had several times brought the kings of that remote empire against Egypt. Sennacherib was on his march against Egypt, but contemplated at the same time to reduce the king of Judah and other minor kings in Mesopotamia and Syria to tributaries, (Isaiah ix. 9.) Isaiah describes in a vision the terror of the Jewish nation at the approach of that northern foe. "*He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron: at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: they are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba: Ramah is afraid: Gibeah of Saul is fled. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim; cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. As yet shall he remain at Nob† that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem,*" (Isaiah x.

* Stier has not observed unjustly, that this verse ought to be regarded as addressed to the royal bride, since it would be a comfort to her respecting what is said v. 11. But the present reading prohibits that view.

† Whence Jerusalem could be seen.

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28, *etc.*) As yet the king threatens only, probably because he finds the city too strong, and is afraid of delay. He sends his troops before all the fenced cities of Judah, that none might remain in his rear, (2 Kings viii. 13.) Hezekiah seeks to satisfy the foe by paying a heavy tribute, (2 Kings xviii. 14—16,)—(thirty times as heavy as that which Pharaoh Necho had exacted, for Sennacherib asked for three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold, while Necho had demanded one hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold,—2 Kings xxiii. 33;) but Sennacherib remains in the country. He came in the autumn of 713: the fields remained untilled, and the country had to suffer famine and oppression for two years, (Isa. xxxvii. 30.) In the meantime Hezkeiah had opened negotiations with Egypt and the far distant king of Ethiopia, (Isa. xxxvi. 9; Ch. xviii.) Sennacherib encamped before the fortress of Lachish, about thirty miles from Jerusalem, ordered his generals and satraps to besiege the capital. "Woe for the multitude of many people which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and for the rushing of nations that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters." (Isa. xvii. 12.) When Shishak, king of Egypt, had marched against Jerusalem, it fell, for "when Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord," the Lord caused a prophet to proclaim: "Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak." (2 Chron. xii. 1—9.) When a hundred years later the Philistines and Arabians marched against Jerusalem, in the reign of Jehoram, they "carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives," for Jehoram had seduced Judah to idolatry and slain his brothers; therefore the prophet Elijah foretold that a great plague should befall himself and his people. (2 Chron. xxi. 11—17.) When thirty years after the Syrians marched against Jerusalem, in the reign of Joash, "they destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus," "because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers." (2 Chron. xxiv. 23, 24.) But while the godly Hezekiah lies in prayer before the Lord, he hears the Divine reply: "Whereas thou hast prayed to me, against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, this is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him," *etc.* (Isa. xxxvii. 15;) and the Lord smote in one night in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and four score and five thousand with the plagues, so that those who remained had to flee in ignominy. The knowledge of this miracle spread far and wide among the nations, and the Greek historian Herodotus (II. 141) narrates it three hundred years later in a fabulous form. Many songs of praise were composed at that time by Hezekiah, the Levites, and others. (Psalms xlviii. lxvi. lxxvi.) Victories gained by an oppressed people, not with bow and spear, nor the arm of flesh, but by the strong hand of the Lord, occasion psalms, at the singing of which the whole nation feels that "the

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Lord who rules heaven and earth—he is *our* God." The historical and instructive books of the nation praise this work of the Lord, and remote generations derived strength and consolation from the remembrance thereof. (1 Macc. vii. 41. Sir. xlviii. 24.) This psalm was at that time composed by a Levite, and its contents correspond to the prophecy of Isaiah. (Cf. Isa. xvii. 12; viii. 7, 8, with v. 3, 4; Isa. xxxiii. 21, with v. 5; Isa. xvii. 14, with v. 16.) The sentiment of this psalm is that of Luther's famous hymn, "A strong fortress is our God."

1 TO the chief Musician, A Song of the sons of Korah, to the tune of the virgins.

Chorus.

2 God *is* our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
3 Therefore will not we fear,
Though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
4 *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.
5 *There is* a river,
The streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,
The holy *place* of the tabernacles of the Most High.
6 God *is* in the midst of her;
She shall not be moved:
God shall help her at early morn.
7 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.

The People.

8 The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

Chorus.

9 Come, behold the words of the LORD,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
10 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariot with fire.
11 Be still, and know that I *am* God:
Exalted among the nations,
Exalted in the earth.

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The People.

12 The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

V. 2—4. Isaiah describes the approach of the enemy thus: "Woe for the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the sea, and for the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters." (Ch. xvii. 12.) And he says elsewhere, (Ch. viii. 7, 8,) "Now therefore behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels and go over all his banks: and he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretchings of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." But God, who for centuries has been the protection and refuge of his people, rises like a rock high above the waters, and though everything around do shake, the hearts of believers remain firm.

V. 5—8. Isaiah says (xxxiii. 20, 21), "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down, not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams." Such a river round about his city is the Lord—no foes can pass it, no mighty one bridge it. Happy the people with whom the Lord dwelleth, who know that were he to *suffer* them to be endangered, he would endanger himself. "God shall help her at early morn," says the Psalmist, and the prophet states, "and behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us," "and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." (Isa. xxxvii. 36.) However much the nation may rage, they grow dumb at the voice of the God of Jacob.

V. 9—12. Where the Lord goes to the war, the wars of man must cease; for his wars are for the establishment of peace. The Psalmist speaks as if the help which the Lord had vouchsafed to the city of David would cause the whole earth to share in her peace, and such was really the case. Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Æthiopia, and Phœnicia, rose in resistance, but were in part crushed by the conqueror's foot. After his disaster before Jerusalem, Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, where his sons slew him, and thus was the might of Assyria broken. The proud king was a chastising rod in the hands of God, but the rod boasted against the hand that led it, and was broken. Beautifully sublime are the words of Isaiah —would that every conqueror were instructed by these words, "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will

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punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith: By the strength of my hands I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent: and I have recovered the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened mouth, or peeped. *Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?"* (Isa. x. 12, *etc.*) Such are the words of the prophet. The Psalmist propounds the same doctrine to the nations of the earth, "Be still, and know that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted in the earth." Happy is the people with whom is such a God, whose refuge is the God of Jacob!

PSALM XLVII.

THE period of the composition of this beautiful psalm, replete with exultant joy, rests chiefly on the interpretation of verse 6. Does it in a *direct* manner refer to the ascent of the ark—or merely *alluding* to it, denote the victory of God? The former is the natural view; the psalm falls then into the time of David, when the ark still used to be taken into the field, (2 Sam. xi. 11, and Psalm lxviii.*) It is very dubious, according to 1 Kings viii. 8, whether after its removal to the temple it ever accompanied the army, though 2 Chron. xiii. 12, seems to speak *for* it. Considering that this psalm is placed between two others which belong to the days of Sennacherib, and that just at that time Messianic hopes revived, one feels inclined to refer it to the days of Hezekiah rather than to those of David. (*Vide* ad. Psalms lxxvi. lxxxvii.) But since the indirect allusion to the ascent of the ark seems rather strange (for the victory over Sennacherib was not gained by the force of arms), we incline to the former view. We presume accordingly that the ark had returned from a victory. The Psalmist rises from that victory to the prospect, that hereafter all the nations of the earth shall be subject to that king, to whom they already belong, though they do not confess it. The Psalmist proclaims in a

* Verse 30, which speaks of the temple, implies no more a later period than does Psalm v. 8.

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sublime lyrical flight (v. 10), the prophetical declaration of Isa. ii. 2, 3. Compare especially Psalm lxxxvii.

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

2 O clap your hands, all ye people;
Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
3 For the LORD most high *is* terrible:
He is a great king over all the earth.
4 He shall subdue the people under us,
And the nations under our feet.
5 He shall choose our inheritance for us,
The excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.
6 God is gone up with a shout,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
7 Sing praises to God, sing praises:
Sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
8 For God *is* the King of all the earth:
Sing ye praises with understanding.
9 God reigneth over the heathen:
God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.
10 The princes of the people are gathered
Unto one people of the God of Abraham:
For the excellent of the earth *belong* unto God:
He is greatly exalted.

V. 2—5. Alive to the magnitude of the Lord's doings for his people, the Psalmist deems it not enough that *they* only should express their gratitude to him: he calls upon all the nations of the earth to pay their homage to him with gestures of joy and songs of praise, which was customary to do at the anointing of monarchs. (2 Kings xi. 12; 1 Sam. x. 24.) The earth is his, though its inhabitants have as yet forborne to pay their homage to him. He has made Israel the heart of mankind: if he willeth, all nations must serve Israel. He has appointed all the nations of the earth for the inheritance of Israel, (Isaiah liv. 3; Zeph. ii. 9:) he has decreed and chosen the excellency of Jacob, the beloved, which is to make him great before the nations. (Isaiah xlix. 3; Luke ii. 32.)

V. 6—10. The ark reascends the sanctuary amid the sound of the trumpet and songs of praises: the whole world is to join in the praises of Israel. Jehovah is also the God of the heathen: the nations shall come some day with their praises, and become one people of the God of Abraham, even as Israel. (Psalm ii. 8; Rev. xi. 15; Zech. xiv. 9.)

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PSALM XLVIII.

A SONG of praise which belongs to the same period as Psalm xlvi. The sentiments of this psalm are even more sublime and joyous, the gratitude of astonishment more lively, on the people opening their eyes in the morning as if after an oppressive dream, and beholding the vast array of corpses of those whose presence dismayed them the day before. And it was as a dream to the mocking foe, "And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel (Jerusalem,) even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul has appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against mount Zion." (Isaiah xxix. 7, 8.)

1 A SONG *and* Psalm of the Sons of Korah.
2 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God, *on* the mountain of his holiness.
3 Beautiful for situation,*
The joy of the whole earth, *is* mount Zion,
On the sides of the north, the city of the great King.
4 God is known in her palaces as her refuge.
5 For, lo, the kings were assembled (or, "took counsel,")
They passed away together.
6 They saw *it* (the city) *and* so they marvelled;
They were dismayed and fled.
7 Fear took hold upon them there,
And pain, as of a woman in travail.
8 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish
With an east wind.
9 As we have heard, so have we seen
In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God:
God hath established it for ever. Selah.
10 We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God,
In the midst of thy temple.
11 According to thy name, O God,
So *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth:
Thy right hand is full of righteousness.

* Tholuck renders, "A beautiful hill, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, a joy of the earth to the remotest north, the city of the great king."

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12 Let Mount Zion rejoice,
Let the daughters of Judah be glad (*i. e.* the provincial towns,)
Because of thy judgments.
13 Walk about Zion, and go round about her:
Tell the towers thereof.
14 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider (or "roam through") her palaces;
That ye may tell *it* to the generation following.
15 Yea, this God *is* our God for ever and ever:
He will be our guide, *even* beyond death.

V. 2—4. In their fearful anticipations they had already seen their beautiful city turned to ruins, and their temple into smoke and ashes. They rejoice in holy astonishment to see her in the rosy light of dawn, strong and unhurt as ever. Many miracles of mercy had already been exhibited on the holy mount. The Psalmist would fain have the whole world be acquainted with the covenant of mercy, to join in his rejoicing at the strong protector who rules over her palaces.

V. 5—7. The proud king, who called himself the great king, boasted that the kings of Hamath and Arpad were serving him. (Isa. x. 8; xxxvi. 4.) He himself did not advance before the city, but remained before Lachish, (*vide* ad. Ps. xlvi.,) about thirty miles distant; but he felt the disaster of his army before Jerusalem, and he was obliged to flee. The kings were assembled; but the King of kings said once more, "Take counsel together and it shall come to nought; speak the word and it shall not stand; for God is with us." (Isa. viii. 10.) The flight was so sudden, that it seemed as if the mere sight of the holy city had driven them back. The Lord did at that time address the proud conqueror by the mouth of his prophet: "But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. *Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears; therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.*" (Isaiah xxxvii. 28, 29.)

V. 8. The Psalmist's meaning probably is, that God, who wrecks the ships at sea by the east wind, has done his miracles here. But the Phœnicians were probably allied with the king of Assyria. Isaiah xxxiii. 21. 23, may refer to this circumstance: "But there the glorious God will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass

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thereby. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast; they could not spread the sail."*

V. 9—12. They had often heard that the Lord is king in Zion, and has engraven her walls in his right hand. Now they once more experienced it. The repeated fulfilment of such promises of God become so engraven upon the human heart that they cannot be effaced. Where else then in the temple of God, kneeling in the sanctuary, are we to expect to find a people after such deliverances? If it has not been realized before that these judgments go forth from the Lord of lords, it is sure to be felt in the sanctuary. The fame of such acts of the Lord spread the glory of his name to the ends of the earth, and brought the embassy of the king of Babylon from a remote country. "Hezekiah was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth, and many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah, king of Judah," (2 Chron. xxxii. 22, 23.) The right hand of the Lord is stretched out over the whole earth, for ever dispensing righteousness, though it may not become manifest until the end of days. Although the rod of chastisement had immediately threatened the capital only, yet all the cities of Judah suffered even more than the capital; for their fields had been laid waste and their goods spoiled. It was, therefore, not only a festival of rejoicing to the capital, but to the whole country in all its borders. They probably hastened from every part of the country to the temple of the Lord, with songs of praise and rejoicing.

V. 13, 14. Unhurt, entirely unhurt, appears Jerusalem in the morning sun: while the clouds concealed her, one might have thought that not a stone had remained on its place; but the clouds disperse, "God has made himself known in her palaces as a refuge." The record of mercy so great was well worthy of being transmitted to succeeding generations like a precious jewel, and the exhortation of the Psalmist has been acted upon. (Cf. Psalm xlvi.)

V. 15. If God remains the same, then the grandchildren will experience the mercy which was enjoyed by their believing fathers. If God so marvellously glorifies himself to weak mortals in this life, will he suffer them to decay into dust and ashes after death? Faith in a blissful eternity awakes most vividly when the mercy of God powerfully shines upon our temporal existence.

* This is an address to the enemy: if, contrary to our supposition, mighty, seafaring Tyre was not allied with Assyria, the prophet's reference to sails and masts would be a figurative description of the vessel of the State, which is not probable.

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PSALM XLIX.

A DIDACTIC psalm, concerning the uncertain prosperity of the proud rich, their certain death, the victory of the godly, and their final reception with God. (Cf. Ps. xxxvii. 73.) The Psalmist had been alarmed at and tempted by the insolent security of the sumptuous children of the world; but his scruples vanished and the struggle ended. He publishes aloud the revelations of God to his soul, and invites attention, (v. 2—5.) The pride of the rich, however lofty, must cease, (v. 6—13.) They are carelessly secure: flatterers render them still more so, but the godly rules them; while *they* depart to the grave, *he* is redeemed by the hand of the Lord, (v. 14—16.) He comforts others with the sources of his encouragement. Divine wisdom only can raise us above the lot of beasts, (v. 17—21.)

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

2 Hear this, all *ye* people;
Give ear, all *ye* inhabitants of the world:
3 Both low and high,
Rich and poor, together.
4 My mouth shall speak of wisdom;
And the meditation of my heart *shall be* of understanding.
5 I will incline mine ear to the oracle (of the Lord,)*
I will open my dark saying† upon the harp.
6 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil,
When the iniquity of my heels (pursuers) shall compass me about?
7 *Of* them that trust in their wealth,
And boast themselves in the multitude of their riches?
8 None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him:
9 (For the redemption of their soul *is* precious,
And it ceaseth for ever:)
10 That he should still live for ever,
And not see corruption.
11 He rather shall see it.
Wise men die,
The foolish and the ignorant perish together,
And leave their wealth to others.

* *I. e.* "To hear it intuitively from the Lord."
† Properly, "an apothegm."

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12 Their inward thought *is, that* their houses *shall continue* for ever,
And their dwelling places to all generations;
They call *their* lands after their own names (or, "their name is published over the land.")
13 Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not:
He is like the beasts *that* perish.
14 This their way *is* their folly:
Yet their followers approve their sayings. Selah.
15 Like sheep they are driven to Sheol:
Death is their shepherd (or, "driver.")
And the upright shall soon have dominion over them,
And their beauty shall consume in Sheol, from their dwelling.*
16 But God will redeem MY soul from the power of Sheol:
For he shall receive me. Selah.
17 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich,
When the glory of his house is increased:
18 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away:
His glory shall not descend after him.
19 Though while he lived he blessed his soul:
(And *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.)
20 He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They shall never see light.
MAN THAT IS IN HONOUR, AND UNDERSTANDETH NOT,
IS LIKE THE BEASTS THAT PERISH.

V. 2—7. The Psalmist calls upon the whole human race to give ear to his words, with which the Spirit of God has inspired him; for he is conscious that he is about to utter a truth which, alike Divine as to its origin and effects, is capable of imparting wisdom to the rich, comfort and strength to the poor. He has heard a Divine voice, and purposes to accompany its recital on the harp. (Cf. ad. Ps. xii. 6.) He has had to struggle and to fear, but Divine and not human wisdom gave him peace. He sings of the struggle of his own heart. He had often feared when the surrounding ungodly became powerful. If others therefore feel after the same manner, they need not be ashamed. But the Psalmist instructs himself by the Divine oracle: so may others instruct themselves by the word of God, and with the same amount of comfort as the Psalmist.

V. 8—11. A rich man may buy much with his money, goods of every kind, pleasures, honours, but he cannot buy eternal life.

* Or, "Their form shall go to Sheol: they must go from their dwelling to be consumed," (for "a consuming.")

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Can that be called a happy life which every hour removes us further from happiness? However much people may differ in other respects, death brings them to the same level. Happy the man who at his departure has riches which he need not leave to others!

V. 12, 13. They know it, but will not know it. Excluding the light of the day, they prefer the artificial light which they themselves have made. They persuade themslves that their houses rest on another foundation than that of the earth. If a rich man feels inclined to deceive himself, he is sure to find many abettors. Their names are praised on earth—may they not think that that which applies to every man, has no reference to them, "Unto dust shalt thou return"? As beasts are destined for the slaughter, so man is doomed to die: no earthly glory, however great it be, can save from death.

V. 14, 15. Their hope is imaginary: the density of the mist which surrounds them is proportioned to the number of their flattering abettors: it will disperse when their hour has struck. They loved to drive others, death now will drive them. Death will lift his rod and drive them from their dwelling to the gloomy regions below. The night passes—but yesterday the rulers, to-day they are the ruled; for if the kingdom of God triumph not in time, it is sure to triumph in eternity.

V. 16. My soul will not remain in Sheol; the way of all of us is downwards, but in the case of some it points again upwards. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who took to himself Enoch and Moses, will also receive me. (Psalm lxxiii. 24.)

V. 17—21. Who will be so foolish and fear? If we have much on earth, we can only keep it on earth. They praise themselves and hear the echo from others; but when the lamp of their life extinguishes, their light has set for ever. Divine wisdom only raises us above the destiny of beasts. Man in all his glory, if deprived of Divine wisdom, is like the beast, and shall perish.

PSALM L.

A DIDACTIC psalm showing that the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are the sacrifices by which God desires to be praised. (Cf. Psalm xl. 7; li. 18, 19; lxix. 31, 32.)

As amid signs of nature, which proclaimed his majesty, God once appeared as the lawgiver, so he comes now as the judge, (v. 1—3). Heaven and earth must behold and hearken, (v. 4—6.) The outward servant of the law, who offends more from obtuseness than from wicked motives, is in majestic irony pointed to the inward worship of God, (v. 7—15). So in the language of flaming

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wrath, the hypocrite (v. 16—23.) Though the divinely instituted peace, thank, and sin-offerings of the Mosaic dispensation, were only intended to answer the end of impressing man with a sense of the insufficiency of his praises, thanksgivings, and sufferings for sin, as well as the necessity of substitution to render them sufficient, —though sacrifices therefore might and ought to have been the true worship of the heart, they were far from being so. Some, owing to the lassitude of the human heart, which prefers to worship God by outward acts rather than inward, regarded the outward sacrifice as the main point, and the sacrifice of the heart as of secondary moment, while others cared not even for the former, and were satisfied with having the law on their lips. The Spirit of God rested on the Psalmist, who describes under his influence the coming Lord as judge. As once he went out from Sinai, (Judges v. 4—*Seir* includes *Sinai*,) so he now goes out from Zion, the beautiful city of God, addressing himself to formal worshippers and hypocrites.

A PSALM of Asaph.

1 The mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken,
And called the earth
From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.
2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God hath shined.
3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence:
A fire shall devour before him,
And it shall be very tempestuous round about him.
4 He shall call to the heavens from above,
And to the earth, that he may judge his people.
5 "Gather together unto me my SAINTS
THOSE THAT HAVE MADE A COVENANT WITH ME BY SACRIFICE."
6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness:
For God *is* judge himself. Selah.
7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak;
O Isral, and I will testify against thee:
I *am* God, *even* thy God.
8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices
Or thy burnt-offerings, *to have been* continually before me.
9 I will take no bullock out of thy house,
Nor he goats out of thy folds.
10 For every beast of the forest *is* mine,
And the cattle upon the hills, where they are by thousands.
11 I know all the fowls of the mountains;
And the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.

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12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee;
For the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.
13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
Or drink the blood of goats?
14 OFFER UNTO GOD THANKSGIVING:
AND PAY THY VOWS UNTO THE MOST HIGH:
15 And call upon me in the day of trouble:
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.
16 But unto the WICKED God saith,
What hast thou to do to declare my statutes,
Or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth;
17 Seeing thou hatest instruction,
And castest my words behind thee?
18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him,
And hast been partaker with adulterers.
19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil,
And thy tongue frameth deceit.
20 Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother;
Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.
21 These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence;
Thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself:
But I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.
22 Now consider this, ye that forget God,
Lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.
23 WHOSO OFFERETH PRAISE GLORIFIETH ME:
AND TO HIM THAT ORDERETH HIS CONVERSATION ARIGHT
WILL I SHOW THE SALVATION OF GOD.

V. 1—4. Asaph introduces the Lord by a lofty name, to impress his hearers with his majesty. He calls the whole earth, yea, heaven and earth, as witnesses to the great judgment of his nation. It is the same Lord who has fixed his tabernacle in Zion, and there manifested himself to the people of his covenant in mercy and righteousness. The long-suffering of God has long been silent, he will now make it known that his long-suffering was not indifference, but mercy. He sends fire and tempests before him as his messengers, announcing the approaching Judge.

V. 5, 6. The covenant at the foot of Sinai had been made by sacrifice: they are the saints of God who continue to remember the obedience which they had then yielded. These are to be gathered first; that they may learn to do in the spirit what now they are doing in the flesh; God himself is the judge: therefore the heavens declare it far and wide, that he holds a righteous judgment.

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V. 7—13. He gives his name before he speaks: it is God, the God of his people. O Israel, who hast so often experienced the righteousness and love of that God—what may thy feelings be, when he announces himself as thy God? When he calls to account, man thinks that is for the sake of outward works. It is so deeply impressed upon the heart of man that his life should be a continuous worship, that he seeks to calm his conscience by outward offerings and works of obedience at least. But they can neither calm the conscience nor satisfy God. Do you think that by offering bullocks and goats you can really *give* anything to the Lord? Oh, man, thou hast *received* them from him; who gave ever anything to him? He has not need to look to thy stables and their scanty occupants. The beasts hid in the forest, the cattle that are by thousands on the hills, the fowl of the air, and the wild beasts roaming the fields—are all his and before him. Why indeed should he ask for bullocks and goats? such gifts cannot benefit *him*, they can only benefit *thee!*

V. 14, 15. Art thou anxious to know the sacrifice which is acceptable to him? It is the *thanksgiving* and *praise* of a believing heart: they must proceed from a believing heart, for none can thank and praise, but they who, strong in faith, receive every blessing and possession which earth can yield, from the hand of God. See how great is his mercy, since his very requirements are blessed promises. *To call upon him in the day of trouble, to take salvation and to offer thanksgiving: such are the sacrifices he desires us to bring.* Oh, God, how merciful art thou, who placest such glorious promises into thy requirements!

V. 16—20. God, who looketh at the heart, says to the hypocrite, What availeth thy boasting before men with the recounting of my commandments, what availeth the utterance of my covenant with thy lips, while I know that thou art averse to Divine discipline? Where is the obedience to the words of the covenant of Sinai? If thou lovest discipline, why dost thou not at least denounce the sins of others? Thou knowest the *sixth* and *seventh* commandments, why makest thou fellowship with thieves and adulterers? Why breakest thou the *eighth*, breakest it shamefully, and givest false testimony against thine own brother? These things thou dost, and in long-suffering I look on for a long time. Thou thinkest that my thoughts are like thine; but the time will come, sooner or later, when I shall surely punish thee, and it will then appear that I have not forgotten anything, though I was silent, and all will be set in order before thine eyes.

V. 21—23. Now consider this, ye that forget God, give heed to my word. I warn you ere the day come, when salvation is gone! Mark it well: *whoso offereth believing praise to me, glorifieth me: he that ordereth his way by mine, shall see the salvation of God!*

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PSALM LI.

We refer the reader to the introduction to Psalm xxxii. which was probably occasioned by the same transgression which is specified in the title of this psalm. David had passed a considerable time in a gloomy sense of guilt and despair of the mercy of God, but convinced by Nathan's address that the Lord was still caring for him, and had not entirely rejected him, he gathered courage once more to seek his God, to confess his guilt before him, and to struggle for his former consciousness of Divine aid, and the spirit of spontaneous and cordial love, the absence of which he now so painfully realized, (v. 14.) Many similar prayers may at that time have ascended to heaven, though this only is preserved to us. It furnishes the evidence of the depth of his sense of guilt, of David's habitual relation to God, and of his knowledge of the way to reconciliation. If it be asked how a man like David could fall to such a degree, we refer to Psalm xxxii. where it was shown in how fearful a manner the history of even a David exhibits the fatality of evil, which with an unrelenting force urges, as it were, even the disinclined, from the first step of guilt on to the second, and from the second to the third. David had never anticipated that the bloodguiltiness, for which he mourns in v. 16, would ever have been added to his adultery.

Re-appearing with downcast eye before his God, he seeks to regain his affection by the confession of his guilt, that abstracting from human relations he had recognized the *eternity* of his guilt as a violation of the eternal laws of God, and that he was conscious not only of the sinfulness of his *works*, but of his *being*, (v. 6—8.) He knows the delights of the *forgiveness of sins*, (v. 9—11,) and recollects the time when God was reigning *over* and *in* him, (v. 12—14.) If it is to return once more, he promises to make the conversion of transgressors the end of his life, (v. 15—17.) He knows God's fundamental condition of the forgiveness of sins, (v. 18—19.)

1.2 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan
the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to
Bathsheba.

3 Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to thy loving-kindness:
According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies
Blot out my transgressions.

4 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

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5 For I acknowledge my transgressions:
And my sin *is* ever before me.
6 Against THEE, THEE ONLY, have I sinned,
And done evil in thy sight:
That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,
And be clear when thou judgest.
7 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity (or, I was gotten of sinful seed;)
And in sin did my mother conceive me.
8 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
And in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
9 Purge (lit. "free me from sin with") me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
10 Make me to hear joy and gladness;
That the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.
11 Hide thy face from my sins,
And blot out all mine iniquities.
12 Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a constant (or, "established") spirit within me.
13 Cast me not away from thy presence;
And take not thy Holy Spirit from me.
14 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;
And strengthen me with a willing spirit.
15 *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways;
And sinners shall be converted unto thee.
16 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness,
O God, thou God of my salvation;
And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*
17 O Lord, open thou my lips;
And my mouth shall show forth thy praise.
18 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it;*
Thou delightest not in burnt-offering.
19 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit:
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.
20 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:
Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

* Righteousness=love, cf. ad. Psalm v. 9.

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21 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of right-
eousness,
With burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering:
Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.*

V. 3—5. David appears before his Lord burdened with uncommon and grave transgression. He intimates his consciousness of it by representing himself as a man altogether disfigured by pollution, requiring a *thorough, i. e.* a long-continued ablution before he can get clean, and who, owing to the greatness and uncommonness of his sin, can only attain to purity by a *great* and *uncommon* display of the mercy of God.

V. 6—8. That conviction of sin, which stops at its finite relation to man, against whom we have sinned, cannot be called a true one. For the guilt of our transgressions against man does by no means get effaced with God as quickly as the tears of those whom we have offended on earth dry away, but every offence against man is a violation of the eternal law of God. So David confessed that though having transgressed human law, by far the greatest and most terrible accusation of his conscience was this, "Thou hast transgressed the statutes and commandments of the law of God!" He felt himself condemned by his conscience without being accused of men (for supposing God to have continued silent, then the connection of his transgressions was not even known among the people,) and having sinned against God, he could not but acknowledge the justice of the condemning sentence of God. And that is the very point which every sinner must reach who desires to realize the forgiveness of his sins. As Paul says, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Cor. xi. 31.) The right conviction of sin comprehends its being acknowledged, not only in *works*, but also in our entire *being*. The knowledge that the root of our sin is based on an absence of love to God, points to deep-seated corruption. So David confesses sinfulness to begin with the life of man, and that not only his works, but *man himself*, is guilty before God. He is well aware of the difficulty of such a confession to the self-complacent heart of man. Now the Lord desires us above all things to be *truthful to ourselves*, for otherwise we cannot be truthful to him. Man must on that account not withdraw him-

* The observations on Psalm xiv. 7, apply to the last two verses of this psalm. They were added when the psalm was sung in the exile (Rosenmüller, Umbreit, Köster.) As v. 19 seemed to speak too lightly of the sacrifices, so v. 21 seems to re-establish their import. The varying interpretations of Calvin, Bucer, Muis, Paulus, De Wette, Ewald, are either wrong or not clear. According to our view, the last couplet contains two, while the former ones have three verses each, which is also the case with Psalms xxxv. 27; xxxviii. 22. Köster divides the psalm after the formula 4, 9, 4, which is by no means to be preferred.

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self from God. The Psalmist is so thoroughly impressed with the resistance of his sinful nature to yield to such a confession, that he ascribes his knowledge to *Divine illumination*.

V. 9—11. He ventures to supplicate forgiveness after his confession: he is a leper needing to be purged with hyssop: (Lev. xiv. 4:) he is blood-stained, and God alone can remove the stain. (Isaiah i. 18.) The allusion to hyssop is significant. This unseemly shrub, which thrives on rubbish and walls, symbolical of Divine condescension, mixed with the noble wood of the cedar, symbolical of Divine majesty, used to be employed in purifications from sin (Numb. xix. 6,) and leprosy, which latter may be regarded as a symbol of sin. Both the greatness and condescension of God are needed for the reconciliation of man. The Psalmist desires to intimate his need of Divine condescension.* He longs to hear that word, which, though its sound die away in the hearing of the self-satisfied, settles refreshing as the morning dew on the broken heart, having joy and delights in its retinue, namely, the word *forgiveness*.

V. 12—14. Judiciously judging that our future cannot improve, while the past remains uncancelled, David prayed for forgiveness of the past before he turns from the present to the future. Equally conscious that the beginning and progress of improvement must take place in the strength of *God*, he turns to the source from which every good gift is derived, praying not only for this virtue or that, but for a clean heart, and having no confidence in his own resolves, he supplicates a new, firm, and constant† Spirit from above. From the contemplation of his transgression, his yearning look reverts to the past, when the hand of God rested blessingly on him, when the holy Spirit of God gave strength to his heart, when he was daily experiencing the aid of God, and his works were voluntary offerings.

V. 15—17. Were such seasons to return once more, how great should his thank-offerings be. He here vows, and afterwards really performed in Psalm xxxii. 9, and many other psalms, to show his gratitude by referring every one in need of forgiveness to this fountain of forgiveness. Since God desires not the praise of unclean lips, we need not be astonished that David still feels his lips tied. *Bloodguiltiness* oppresses his soul. Recollecting the time of his communion with Him who has the power to condemn and to absolve, and having regained courage, he supplicates him first to remove guilt from his heart, and thereby the restraint from his lips. If he opens his lips, no accuser will be suffered to shut them again, for who can bind on earth what is loosed in heaven?

V. 18, 19. He would give any and everything were the seasons

* Cf. Hengstenberg's Moses and Egypt, p. 183.

† Cf. נָכוֹן Gen. xli. 32.

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to return when he enjoyed communion with God, a cheerful heart and a constant spirit, when the protection of God was spread out over him, and his Spirit reigned in his heart. Let none imagine that the price of many thousand offerings were too much for him; sacrifice and burnt-offering, if they could buy his peace, he would gladly give. The wisdom which was given to him in hours of illumination (*vide* ad. Psalm xl. 7; Psalm l.) taught him that God prizes only the broken bones of the burnt-offering if emblematic of the broken heart, and the slain beast if emblematic of the slain self-will of the offerer. Though this expression sounds as if David rejected all sacrifice, other passages of Holy Writ show that such a manner of expression is selected for the purpose of directing special attention to the last member of a sentence: *e. g.* Paul says, "He therefore that despiseth (man,) despiseth *not* man *but* God."* Sacrifice is the *yielding*, *resigning*, or *giving up* of a thing. The best sacrifice which a sinner can offer God is his heart, which gives up its sinful will, as hitherto exhibited in acts, to the consuming flame of repentance, and yields its newly-awakened desire in child-like faith to God, to be strengthened and glorified by him. (Cf. Psalm xxxiv. 19; Isa. lvii. 15.)

PSALM LII.

A PSALM of David occasioned by the following circumstances. On his flight from the court and the borders of Israel, he had entered the house of Ahimelech, the priest, at Nob, and asked him for a meal and a weapon. Doeg, the director of the herdsmen and flocks of the king, hereupon accused David and the priest of a conspiracy against the life of the king, and afterwards, in obedience to the injunction of Saul, slew eighty-five helpless priests whom none other of the servants of the king ventured to touch. (1 Sam. xxi. 1—10; xxii. 1—20.) David probably penned this psalm after Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, had come and apprised him of the event. (1 Sam. xxii. 20, 21.)

1.2 TO the chief Musician, a Poem of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.†

3 Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O tyrant,
Since the goodness of God *endureth* continually?

* 1 Thess. iv. 8; Winer's Grammar of the New Testament, p. 464.
† 1 Samuel, xxii. 9.

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4 Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs,
Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit!
5 Thou lovest evil more than good;
And lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.
6 Thou lovest all devouring words,
O *thou* deceitful tongue.
7 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever,
He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling-place,
And root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.
8 The righteous also shall see, and fear,
And shall laugh at him:
9 "Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength;
But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
And strengthened himself in his wickedness."
10 But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God:
I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
11 I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it:*
And I will wait on thy name;
For *it is* good before thy saints.

V. 3. The mighty ones, on prospering in their affairs, arrogantly think to have wrested the dominion from the hands of the Lord, and the weak in faith persuade themselves that such is really the case. But just on that account God will not persist in silence. David has so often had occasion to experience this, that he can now defy appearances, and while the mischief of men seemingly wields the sceptre, to exclaim: "*The goodness of God endureth continually.*"

V. 4—6. One should think that even savages would benefit the homeless, whose life is endangered by unjust hatred and suspicion. On Saul's inquiring of his servants the abode of the fugitive David, and promising them reward, they at least persist in silence. A lenient word of defence would have been appropriate; for Saul in his blindness thinks that David aims at his life. They are silent—but Doeg speaks. He fans by treacherous speech the suspicions of Saul instead of softening them. He declares that he has seen the compassionate priest giving a meal and a weapon to the anointed of the Lord, who was obliged to flee beyond the borders of Israel. He asperses charity with treason. (Cf. Saul's speech to Ahimelech, 1 Sam. xxii. 23.) He could anticipate the consequences: the word escapes, cutting like a sharp razor. The king orders eighty-five innocent men, helpless priests of God in linen ephods, (1 Sam. xxii. 18,) to be slain. The servants of the king

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shrink with dismay from the deed—not so the traitor, who adds murder to his treason.

V. 7, 8. "God will show himself froward with the froward." (Psalm xviii. 27.) He causes him to encounter what he devised against others. He is now concealed in the shadow of God, proudly spreading his boughs like a mighty tree; but the hand of God is stronger by far, and he shall be cut down. The Lord shall make him a spectacle to the righteous: they shall laugh at his folly and fear the righteous Lord. History is replete with spectacles of this kind to those who have the seeing eye, though the temporal judgments of God are still influenced by the long-suffering of God. (Rom. ii. 4, 5.)

V. 9. Those who have not the protection of God seek for protection in the things of this world. Doeg, the director of the herdsmen and flocks of Saul, was in all probability not a poor man: yet he suffered himself to be enticed by the reward of riches. (1 Sam. xxii. 7.) It frequently happens that riches render a man more covetous than poverty. Doeg sought for strength in his wickedness, not in virtue.

V. 10, 11. It is the eternal assurance of faith, which no appearance can baffle, that he who has cast his root in God, shall flourish in the house of God—*i. e.* in communion with him. Those who do not see it in time shall assuredly see it in eternity. He shall flourish and prosper like the favoured olive-tree, which yields much fruit without almost any culture, and its leaves fade not even in winter. (Jer. xi. 6.) David ascribes all the praise to God, for he does it and none else. He therefore confides in his name, and calmly waits for the revelation of this name. Though others may ignore it, to his people God always continues a cornucopia of mercy and grace. The greatness and beauty of their thoughts and hopes are all concealed in *the name of the Lord.*

PSALM LIII.

With slight variations the same as Psalm xiv. The alterations were intended to render it more adapted for liturgical usage in the time of the captivity.

PSALM LIV.

Threatened with treason from the citizens of Keilah, the pursued servant of God fled to the woody mountain heights near the town of Siph. (1 Sam. xxiii. 14, 15.) His friend Jonathan came

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there to comfort him, (1 Sam. xxiii. 16,) but the treachery of men disturbs him even there, for the Siphites sent word to Saul. (1 Sam. xxiii. 19.)

The Psalmist has hardly begun to pour out his complaint, (v. 1—5,) and his soul gets more calmed, (v. 6—8;) yea, he rejoices in victory, while affliction is as yet present with him, (v. 9.)

1 TO the chief Musician on the harp, and instruction of David,
2 When the Siphites came and said to Saul: Doth not David hide himself with us?
3 Save me, O God, by thy name,
And secure me justice by thy strength.
4 Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.
5 For strangers (barbarians) are risen up against me,
And oppressors seek after my soul:
They have not set God before them. Selah.
6 Behold, God *is* mine helper;
The Lord *is* with them that uphold my soul.
7 Evil shall fall back upon mine enemies:
Cut them off in thy faithfulness.
8 I will freely sacrifice unto thee:
I will praise thy name, O LORD, for *it is* good.
9 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble:
And mine eye hath seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

V. 3—7. Men were treacherous, therefore the servant of God, on being forsaken by men, flees to the Lord. He may well do it, for he believes that God will hear his prayers. They have not set God before them; no wonder, therefore, that they violate justice and ignore love. They even ignore it towards the harmless one who has been unjustly pursued for years, and chased through forests and deserts because of the caprice of a suspicious tyrant. David prays in the faith, which is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. xi. 1.) He roams through the wood and the desert, but the eye of faith espies the salvation of God. God will be the helper of him whom all men have forsaken. God will recompense and cause their mischief to fall back upon their own head; he will do it in his faithfulness, for his word is yea and amen; and he did do it, for while Saul was on his pursuit a messenger arrived, saying, "Haste thee and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land," (1 Sam. xxiii. 27:) and the rock where the deliverance of David took place was called for a memorial, "The rock of escape."

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V. 8, 9. Many vow thank-offerings in the hour of need, and after the need is past, perform them with an unwilling disposition; but David performs them with a joyous heart. Why should he do otherwise, seeing that the name of the Lord is so rich in mercy? The future becomes the present to the eye of faith: in the midst of distress he beholds deliverance; pursued by his enemies, he sees his desire in their downfall: for it is the delight of the pious to see by the judgments of God that "the government on earth is in the hand of the Lord." (Sir. x. 4.) David saw this the second time, when on the Siphites thinking to deliver him into the hands of Saul, the Lord delivered his pursuers into his own. Even Saul, covered with shame, and overpowered by the hand of the Lord, was then constrained to exclaim, "*Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail.*" (1 Sam. xxvi. 25.)

PSALM LV.

A PSALM of David, composed on his escape from Absalom in the wilderness near Jordan, where he was informed of the evil counsel of Ahithophel, without knowing that Absalom had refused it. (2 Sam. xvii. 21, 22.)

The psalm begins in great disquietude of mind, (v. 2—9.;) the picture of the city, ruled by rebels, and of his faithless friend, arises before the eye of the exiled king, (v. 10—15.) His heart revives, he takes comfort from the hope of the ultimate triumph of his prayers, and concludes with an expression of hope, which, however, seems to denote that his disquietude was only partially conquered, (v. 16—24.)

1 TO the chief Musician on the harp, an instruction of David.
2 Give ear to my prayer, O God:
And hide not thyself from my supplication.
3 Attend unto me, and hear me:
I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; (or, "I roam in my complaint and cry;")
4 Because of the voice of the enemy,
Because of the oppression of the wicked;
For they cast iniquity upon me,
And in wrath they hate me.

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5 My heart is sore pained within me:
And the terrors of death are fallen upon me:
6 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,
And horror hath overwhelmed me.
7 And I said, Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
For then would I fly away, and be at rest.
8 *Lo, then* would I wander far off,
And remain (or, "find rest") in the wilderness. Selah.
9 I would hasten my escape
From the sweeping storm *and* tempest.
10 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues:
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
11 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof:
Mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it.
12 Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof:
Deceit and guile depart not from her streets.
13 For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me;
Then I could have borne *it:*
Neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify *himself* against me;
Then I would have hid myself from him:
14 But it *was* thou, a man whom I made mine equal,
My guide, and mine acquaintance.
15 We took sweet counsel together,
And walked unto the house of God in company (or, "with the crowd.")
16 Let death seize upon them,
And let them go down alive into Sheol,
For wickedness *is* in their dwellings, *and* among them.
17 As for me, I will call upon God;
And the LORD shall save me.
18 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray,
And cry aloud:
And he shall hear my voice.
19 He shall deliver my soul in peace from the battle *that is* against me:
For there are many against me.
20 God shall hear, and afflict them,
Even he that sitteth on the throne from everlasting. Selah.
Because they have no changes,
Therefore they fear not God.

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21 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him:
He hath broken his covenant.
22 *The words* of his mouth was smoother than butter,
But war *was* in his heart:
His words were softer than oil,
Yet *were* they drawn swords.
23 Cast thy burden upon the LORD,
And he shall sustain thee:
He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
24 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction:
Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days;
But I will trust in thee.

V. 2—5. It was an anxious hour when David poured out his soul in this psalm before the Lord. On his first leaving the city (Cf. Psalm iii.) he enjoyed a calm mind, but learning the insult conferred upon him by his own son in obedience to the counsel of Ahithophel, (2 Sam. xvi. 21,) as well as Ahithophel's new schemes for his destruction, he became deeply moved. He has neither rest nor peace: in the measure as his heart is excited, so roams his complaint—now in this direction, now in that. He hears as it were the voice of the enemy from Jerusalem, and is afraid lest they should lay hands on the Lord's anointed. And his own deluded child leads his enemies. His heart may well be sore pained.

V. 6—9. He prepares to leave the frontiers of Canaan, (Cf. ad. Psalm xlii. 7:) he feels the presence of men a burden, and would like best to hasten to remote deserts. We smart more beneath the strokes which the hand of man, than those which the hand of God, inflicts upon us: he got almost wroth with the fair countenance of man. Like a timid dove, chased by the tempest, hastens to her window, (Isaiah lx. 8,) so he desires simply to fly away to some remote desert or elsewhere, to find a refuge from the rising storm.* Absalom was advancing with an army of upwards of twenty thousand, (2 Sam. xviii. 7,) and his faithless subjects follow the new sovereign.

* He was already in a desert when he received the news from the city, (see Introd. ad. Psalm lxiii.) but that desert near Jordan on the northern portion of the Dead Sea was not far from Jerusalem, and might at any time be occupied by the foe. But David desires to wander to a remote desert —totally separate from human intercourse. So Jeremiah exclaims, "Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; then would I leave my people and go from them." (Jer. ix. 2.)

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V. 10—12. He has received news respecting the state of things in the city. (1 Sam. xvii. 21.) We may readily imagine what things are, when rebels dethrone the rightful sovereign.* David had preferred the odium of flight to exposing the whole city to the edge of the sword. (2 Sam. xv. 14.) Violence and strife, sad watchmen, go about her walls. Sorrow reigns in her midst. Wickedness within, deceit and guile without her gates where the markets were held. There the kings used to establish their throne, (1 Kings xxii. 10; Jer. xxxviii. 7,) giving counsel and judgment to the people. Absalom probably there conferred with Ahithophel, and there sat in judgment too; for with the promise of more equitable judgments, he had seduced the people to desert his father. (2 Sam. xv. 4.) But besides these acts of oppression, the thought of the transgression which Absalom committed in the sight of all Israel grieved David most: his deluded son had at the instigation of a treacherous friend perpetrated incest with his father's wives, that "*all Israel shall hear that he had caused his father's name to be abhorred.*" (2 Sam. xvi. 21.) The insulted king exclaims, "Destroy, O Lord, divide their tongues." His first thought on hearing of Ahithophel's desertion was, "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel to foolishness," (2 Sam. xv. 31,) and his prayer was heard.

V. 13—15. We know what we have to expect from an *enemy:* if we can protect ourselves, we need not move. But if a *friend* aims a blow, we have not only gained a foe, but lost a friend: we feel the blow, though we should succeed in evading it. Honest David, who had remained faithful for many years to Saul, his infuriated persecutor, must have doubly felt such blows. How great had been his attachment to Ahithophel! "As if a man had inquired at the oracle of God, so was the counsel of Ahithophel to David." (2 Sam. xvi. 23.) David had given him his heart, raised him to equality with himself in government, shown to him sweet friendship at home, and in sight of all the people gone with him to the temple of God. Thus treated a king his subject. That same friend could now advise "to cause the name of David to be abhorred by all Israel." David, thou who didst find a Jonathan, and experience in him the sweets of friendship, hast been obliged to taste in this case its bitter!

V. 16—18. Is David, so greatly disappointed in his friend, and having by the treachery of a friend lost the love of his people as well as his throne, to be blamed for desiring the due recompense of such great wickedness? His mind gets calmer, and he uses the remedy, which when all others have vanished still remains to the

* A better translation may probably be, "Yea, I see." David would then describe how with his mind's eye he sees the punishments for which he prayed as already accomplished.

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godly, namely, prayer. Knowing, however, that God is not satisfied with a transient emotion of the heart, that he desires above all *faith*, and as faith cannot otherwise reveal itself than in persevering prayer, though *help* may be delayed, he promises to *persevere* in prayer to the end. A master in prayer like David could make this promise the easier, since he did not so much regard the fruit of prayer as prayer itself, and was no doubt familiar with its delights. He specifies three hours of the day, at which he promises to call upon God with a loud voice, meaning thereby that the loud cry of the mouth should in the interval be echoed back by the gentle voice of the heart.

V. 19—22. Though unable to see that his prayer is answered, he believes it. To this effect he assures himself that his prayer will be answered for two reasons. The first, that the government of God is the same now as it was of old; the second, that there is no hope of a change for the better with the rebels who fear not God. Remembering them anew, he once more tells God that theirs is an uncommon offence against God and man, in having violated the bonds of friendship, and deceived under the mask of hypocrisy.

V. 23, 24. The commencement of this psalm showed how heavy was the burden which oppressed his heart. How great is the blessedness of the godly in being able to pray! He has got rid of the burden by casting it upon the Lord. (Psalm xxxvii. 5; 1 Peter v. 7.) His faith unflinchingly adheres to the eternal law, that the righteous shall never be moved—the righteous being he who cleaves to God. The Old Testament saints had to adhere to this with less light of revelation than that which we enjoy, and yet probably kept it better than we. He desires the immediate fulfilment of the truth of his hope, in praying for an extraordinary divine punishment to remove his adversaries in the midst of their days. And so it happened, for Ahithophel, the originator of the mischief, hanged himself; Absalom died suddenly by the hand of Joab; the greater part of his rebellious followers perished in the ravines of the mountains of Ephraim, in the wood of Ephraim, where the decisive battle took place, and many were consumed by the sword. (2 Sam. xviii. 8.)

PSALM LVI.

A PSALM of David, when he had fled from the court of Saul and the land of his fathers to the Philistines in Gath, where they seized him who had slain Goliath. (1 Sam. xxi. 10.) He had still with him the sword of Goliath, which Ahimelech gave him. Gath was

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moreover the native city of Goliath. His enterprise was on that account very hazardous. He did indeed not go before the king (1 Sam. xxi. 12, *etc.*) of his own accord, but, intending to conceal himself, was seized.

This psalm was probably composed at the time when they were searching for him. Twice bitterly complaining against man, he twice gets strengthened through faith in the word of Him against whom all mankind cannot prevail, (v. 5—11, 12.)

1 TO the chief Musician, concerning the silent dove in a far-away country, A golden Psalm of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.
2 Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up;
He fighting daily oppresseth me.
3 Mine enemies would daily swallow *me* up;
For *they be* many that fight against me, O thou Most High.
4 What time I am afraid,
I will trust in thee.
5 In God I will praise his word,
In God I have put my trust;
I will fear not what flesh can do unto me.
6 Every day they wrest my words:
All their thoughts *are* against me for evil.
7 They gather themselves together,
They hide themselves, they mark my steps,
When they wait for my soul.
8 Shall they escape by iniquity?
In *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.
9 Thou tellest my wanderings:
Put thou my tears into thy bottle:
Are they not in thy book?
10 When I cry *unto thee*, then shall mine enemies turn back:
This I know; FOR GOD IS FOR ME, (or, "GOD IS MINE.")
11 In God will I praise *his* word:
In the LORD will I praise *his* word.
12 In God have I put my trust:
I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.
13 Thy vows *are* upon me, O God, (or, "I owe vows unto thee, O God:")
I will render praises unto thee.

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14 For thou hast delivered my soul from death:
Wilt not *thou deliver* my feet from falling (or, "my feet from falling,"*)
That I may walk before God in the light of the living?

V. 1—3. The title furnishes the index to the sense of David's desertion, in which he calls himself an innocent mute dove, driven away from her native country. He submitted to everything without any resistance. Encountering everywhere enemies, he regards all men as such. (Cf. v. 5.) He had but recently experienced the enmity of Doeg, and meets new enemies in a foreign land, where he might at least have hoped to be secure from Saul. They would daily swallow him up. Saul gave him no rest. At Nob he found Doeg, and here the enemies of his nation, who are equally *his* enemies. So many are against him, and that insolently, for they despise the regal dignity which the Lord had conferred upon him.

V. 4, 5. He has no one with him in whom to confide: but he trusts in that support which though invisible to human eye is yet beheld by faith—the *word of the Lord.* What is all flesh compared to that rock: as he refers to some specific word, he probably alludes to the word of the Lord, by which Samuel had promised the royal throne of Israel to the shepherd youth. Jonathan, though Saul's son, (1 Sam. xxiii. 17,) trusted in that word; and Saul himself submitted to it and said to David, "Thou shalt do both great things and also shalt still prevail." (1 Sam. xxvi. 25.)

V. 6—8. David contemplates his present experience among the Philistines. They probably assembled and consulted whether he was the man or not—whether they should take him before Achish or attack him at once; they followed his steps lest they should lose sight of him. But he is sure that if the word of a king is to be depended on, much more that of the Lord of heaven and earth. Shall mischief prosper against the anointed of God? No, his adversaries are cast down.

V. 9—12. Thus he strengthens his soul. His tears are despised by men—but they are precious before God, like precious wine, enclosed in leathern bottles. He suffers not one of them to be lost. The tears of the pious are quickly dried up before the eyes of men—they seem vile unto them—but the angels of God gather them up and take them to their place. The days of the wanderings of his servant, and all his tears, are written in the book of God. Does not this apply to the tears of *all* his servants? What an account will that be, when God shall one day reproach oppressors and tyrants with the tears of crushed innocence?

With thoughts like these the Psalmist edifies himself, while as

* *I. e.* without "Wilt not thou deliver." Translate "For hast not thou delivered my soul from death, my feet from falling, that," *etc.*

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yet the tears flow down his cheeks. He sees the enemies recede. He neither knows the manner of his escape nor the end of the days of his wanderings—he has neither peace, nor happiness, nor joy, but "this I know, that *God* is mine." This is the blessed language of a heart reconciled to God. How much more should we Christians use language like this! Blessed be God who is so near to his creatures! The *word*, the word is before the soul of David: on it he takes his standing as on a high rock, at the base of which the waves are breaking, and cries courageously, "I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."

V. 13, 14. He thinks of songs of praise while he sings as yet psalms of complaint, of vows of gratitude while he prays. He knows not *how* his escape will be—but he is sure that some escape will come. Such deliverances need not always be miraculous. In this instance it was the *sagacity* of the persecuted king which opened the door of escape: the thought was given him to feign madness before the king. Others would have praised their own sagacity at such a thought, but David knows that even wise thoughts flow to man in the hour of need from no other source than from the Father of light, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

PSALM LVII.

A PSALM composed when David fled from Saul in the cave which is referred to in Psalm cxlii., and which because it is without any other distinction called "the cave," is probably that celebrated cave where David with his six hundred followers lay concealed, (Cf. 1 Sam. xxiii. 13,) when Saul entered and David cut off the skirt of his robe, (1 Sam. xxiv. 4.) The king, accompanied by three thousand followers, chased* him to the loftiest alpine

* A traveller (Fuerer of Hainendorf) describes the wilderness of Engedi, where that mountain was: "It is a long and awful mountain range by the Dead Sea, where only few shepherds dwell, that have no houses, but live with their cattle in the caverns of the rocks." A difficult path through cliffs led from Engedi, situate on the shore, to Jerusalem, (2 Chron. xx. 16.) Robinson says respecting it, (Palestine, vol. ii. p. 438:) "This path descends in zikzak, frequently below the most precipitous corner, which horses only know how to make, and runs partly along projecting rocks down the perpendicular side of the cliff and then down the almost equally precipitous ruins. My companion had roamed over the heights of Lebanon and the mountains of Persia, I myself ascended the Alps, but neither of us had ever met with so difficult and perilous a pass." The sea is seen 1500 feet below the spectator (not 500 according to the Text, *vide* Hall. Lit. Zeit. 1842. No. 71.)

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heights—"to the sheep-cotes," where the cattle was driven in the hottest summer months only—to hunt him in every hiding-place. There was a cave, in the darkened cool of which David and his men were hid. Such caves in Palestine and the East are frequently enlarged by human hands, and so capacious that they accomodate thousands of people. This song of complaint was sung during the hours of suspense which David spent there to wait until the calamity was overpast, (v. 2,) in which he only gradually gains a stout heart, (v. 8.) His life was really suspended by a hair if Saul or any of his attendants had espied him!

The psalm begins with a mind already grown calm, twice arising from the mournful present to the sublime hope that the Lord shall display his glory over all the earth, (v. 2—6, 7—12.)

1 TO the chief Musician, to the tune, "Destroy not," A golden Psalm of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.
2 Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me:
For my soul trusteth in thee (or, "fleeth to thee:")
Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge,
Until *these* calamities be overpast.
3 I will cry unto God most high:
Unto God that performeth *all things* for me.
4 He shall send from heaven, and save me
From the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah.
God shall send forth his mercy and his faithfulness.
5 My soul *is* among lions:
And I lie *even among* them that are set on fire,
Even the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.
6 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;
Let thy glory *be* above all the earth.
7 They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down:
They have digged a pit before me,
Into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves*. Selah.
8 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed (or, "prepared:")
I will sing and give praise.
9 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp:
I *myself* will awake early.
10 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people:
I will sing unto thee among the nations.

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11 For thy mercy *is* as far as the heavens,
And thy faithfulness as far as the clouds.
12 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens:
Let thy glory *be* above all the earth.

V. 2—4. This is the basis of David's trust, that he ascribes the honour to his God, and knows no other refuge under whose pinions he can flee. He means to seek a shelter there, till the tempest is over. What may his fears have been on hearing from the back part of the cavern the noise of the three thousand warriors, or seeing some one enter the cave! He knows that his God is not an inactive God, but that the hand of God is free and powerful, when his own is lamed. The heavens—the dwelling-place of God—are high, but his arm is not shortened that it could not reach down. Happy are we that his mercy and faithfulness is not only concealed from above us in the clouds, but becomes apparent and reigns on earth among the children of men.

V. 5, 6. It is awful indeed to live amongst lions and tigers with savage glaring eyes and blood-red mouths, but it is more awful to dwell among men with the hearts of tigers, for the means of oppression with which the lion and the tiger are furnished are confined to their mouths and claws, while man has everything which his understanding may shape into instruments of malice. His teeth are his spear and arrows, and the tender weak tongue he wields as a sharp sword. He who attacks the servants of the Lord attacks the Lord himself. David therefore cries to God to show his enemies the consequences of laying hands on *his* servants. He prays him to disclose his majesty above the heavens, and his glory over all the earth, that they might see that they are no mean people who serve such a God.

V. 7. His glance once more reverts to the pit before him; his soul is bowed down and near the fall, but mentally he sees them who digged the pit fall into it themselves. They had prepared a net for the fugitive, but the persecutors really got caught in it. This should elicit a Selah from every feeling heart!

V. 8—10. He declares before his God with jubilant joy that his heart is fixed: the plaintive cry is changed into the song of rejoicing and the play of the psaltery. He awakens his soul, and the strings of his harp, feeling that having experienced mercy so rich, his every nerve and vein ought to thrill with ecstatic joy. How remiss are men in praising the Lord for undeserved benefits! David intends to awake with the dawn that the praise of the Lord may be his first thought. He is not satisfied with singing before his people in his own house: had he a voice that could be heard by all the nations of the earth, he would fain exert it to make them the participators of his praise and thanksgiving.

V. 11, 12. A hard and ungrateful heart beholds even in pros-

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perity only isolated drops of divine grace; but a grateful one like David's, though chased by persecutors and striking the harp in the gloom of a cave, looks upon the mercy and faithfulness of God as a mighty ocean, waving and heaving from the earth to the clouds, and from the clouds to the earth again.

PSALM LVIII.

This psalm refers not to real judges, which verse 2 seems to intimate, but, as shows verse 3, to such as exercise oppression in the land. When it is said, "Ye divide the violence of your hands," or, "Ye weigh it," the allusion seems to be to self-revenge as checking the exercise of the law. It would be difficult to account for David's composing a psalm against the unjust judges of Saul, still less against his own, whom he would rather have made to feel the severity of the laws. Several circumstances render it very probable that this psalm was occasioned when Joab and his brother had given vent to their vengeance in assassinating Abner, who had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in battle. (2 Sam. iii. 30.) Abner, the valiant and generous, of whom David said after his decease, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" had come full of confidence to David that he might deposit into his hands the sceptre over the remaining tribes of Israel. Not only the vengeance but the ambition of Joab, who would not endure him as a rival in the favour of David, had led him to violate hospitality by his base act—an act so base, that in the eyes of David's servants it appeared to fall upon his own head—as if he had broken good faith. He says therefore, "I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner: let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on a sword, or that lacketh bread." He wept with a loud voice on the grave of the noble hero, and sang his funeral ditty. "Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou." The haughtiness and passion of Joab and his brother had become so intense that he exclaimed, "These men, the sons of Zeruiah, be too hard for me: the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness." (2 Sam. iii. 39.) Yet he intended not to subject them to righteous punishment, as he did immediately afterwards the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, who assassinated Ishbosheth the son of Saul. (2 Sam. iv. 12.) But the

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sons of Zeruiah were too powerful for him, and he therefore committed their punishment to God—though he never forgot their heinous crime, for on his death-bed he remembered the innocently-shed blood of the prince in Israel, (1 Kings ii. 5,) and charged his son to punish it.

1 TO the chief Musician, to the tune "Destroy not," a golden Psalm of David.
2 Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?
Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?
3 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness;
Ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.
4 The wicked are estranged from the womb:
They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.
5 Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent:
They are like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear;
6 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers,
Be the charmer never so cunning.
7 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth:
Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.
8 Let them melt away as waters *which* run continually:
When they bend *their bow to shoot* their arrows, let them be as cut in pieces, (or, "blunted.")
9 As a snail *which* melteth, let *every one of them* pass away:
Like the untimely birth of a woman, *that* they may not see the sun.
10 Before your pots can feel the thorns,
He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living and burning.
11 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance:
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
12 So that a man shall say, Verily, *there is* a reward for the righteous:
Verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

V. 2, 3. People seek always to justify self-revenge though it interferes with the exercise of the law; these two fierce brothers may probably have made it their boast that they did right. But the funeral ditty on Abner which David sang, compelled them to hear before all the people that the noble hero fell by the *violence of assassins*. They could not even say, We have dealt with Abner as he dealt with our brother, for Asahel fell by the hand of Abner in open battle, nor did Abner aim his spear at him till after he had

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in vain addressed to him words of earnest and friendly admonition. (2 Sam. ii. 23.) David calls it a wickedness *in* or *from the heart*, for the deed had been perpetrated with forethought and cunning.

V. 4—6. Nor was it a single act of violence: he could have forgiven that. Deceit and oppression lay blended with courage in the breast of the two brothers. Penitence would have prevented the second crime, if it had merely been the ebullition of passion. The same Joab, while saying to Amasa, his envied under-captain, "Art thou in health, my brother?" (or, "Peace be with thee, my brother,") thrust with his left hand the sword into his body. (2 Sam. xx. 10.) His heart was filled with untameable venom, the poison of envy and ambition, which neither severity nor leniency could conquer. Serpents may be charmed by the sound of music so that they do not emit their poison—not so these children of wrath. David had resisted the temptation of Joab to fill him with suspicion against his faithful subject, and he had no doubt expressed himself in the language of confidence and gentleness. (2 Sam. iii. 24, 25.) The poisonous adder could not be charmed—his perilous bite was done the more secretly.

V. 7—10. The sovereign feels himself too weak to use the arm of justice against these powerful men. He therefore calls upon the Lord to do justice, to destroy the success of their schemes contrived by cunning and violence, to break their destructive strength as one deprives wild beasts of their teeth, as water dissolves, as if one breaks the point of the spear, as a creeping snail melts, as an abortion dissolves in the womb, as the tempests of the desert tears away the half-burnt thorns ere the pots can feel their flame.

V. 11, 12. It is the comfort of kings, that if they are too weak for the administration of justice, there is a King above whose hands are never tied. The King of kings gives these signs to show that though much power is conferred upon mortals, no one can deprive him of his sceptre.

PSALM LIX.

A PSALM of David composed when Saul had first cast the javelin at him, and then after his escape caused his house to be watched at night that he might seize and kill him on the morrow. But Michal, his wife, had secretly let him go out at an unguarded place, and he fled at night to the neighbouring Ramah,* to Samuel and

* Now *Soba*, according to Robinson's Palestine, vol. ii. p. 581, *etc.*, at a distance of about ten miles from Jerusalem. (Cf. Introduction, page 24, note ‡.)

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his school of prophets, (1 Sam. xix. 18,) where this psalm was probably composed. We may perceive to how great an extent the Spirit of God reigned in that circle, from the fact that the three separate companies whom Saul sent out to seize David felt the Spirit of God come upon them, and they began to prophesy, as in fact even Saul on coming was overwhelmed by the strength of the Spirit. (1 Sam. xix. 20, *etc.*)

1 TO the chief Musician, to the tune, "Destroy not," A golden psalm of David, when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.
2 Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God:
Defend me from them that rise up against me.
3 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,
And save me from bloody men.
4 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul:
The mighty are gathered against me;
Not *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O LORD.
5 They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault:
Awake to meet me, and behold.
6 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Awake to visit all the heathen:
Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.
7 Let them return at evening;
And make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.
8 Behold, they belch with their mouth:
Swords *are* in their lips:
For who, *say they*, doth hear?
9 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them;
Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.
10 O, my strength, I will wait upon thee:*
For God *is* my defence.
11 God shall prevent me by his mercy:
God shall let me see *my desire* upon mine enemies.
12 Slay them not (suddenly) lest my people forget:
Scatter them by thy power;
And bring them down, O LORD our shield.
13 *For* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips
Let them even be taken in their pride:
And for cursing and lying *which* they speak.

* Fourteen MSS. and all the ancient versions read אֵלַי instead of אֵלָיו.

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14 Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them*, that they *may* not *be:*
And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob
Unto the ends of the earth. Selah.
15 And at evening let them return;
And let them make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.
16 Let them wander up and down for meat,
Though they be not satisfied, and will stay all night.
17 But I will sing of thy power;
Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning:
For thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.
18 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing:
For God *is* my defence, *and* the God of my mercy.

V. 2, 3. Though having effected his escape, David still prays for deliverance from Saul and his people, for their wrath was still alive, and they soon came to Ramah to seize him: the messengers are three times in succession overcome by the Spirit—at last the king himself. The character of the servants of Saul, who, devoid of love and truthfulness, were not better than their master, may be inferred from their becoming the abettors of malice, and not having the courage of Jonathan to take the part of innocence. Doeg was amongst their number.

V. 4, 5. If we have to deal with such people, innocence is a great comfort, for he who is conscious of his innocence knows indubitably that God is his ally and may courageously invoke his aid like David, "Awake to meet me, O Lord, and behold."

V. 6. Shall not the Judge of the world send help? David feels here as we do when judgment is delayed in time: we then long for the last judgment, that all iniquity may for ever cease. In a similar manner he prayed elsewhere (Psalm vii. 8. 10) for the last judgment, and consoled himself by it to attain to a more perfect assurance of the righteous judgment of God in his own case. At the judgment of the heathen, the judgment of *heathenish-minded Israel* will not fail to take place, (Psalm lxxv. 9; cf. also Psalm lxxxii. 8,) for God is good to *that Israel only that are of a clean heart.* (Psalm lxxiii. 1.)

V. 7. His imagination depicts them as already standing and waiting with open mouths for prey, but they have to stand and wait from morning till evening, and roam like hungry dogs round about and through the city.

V. 8, 9. The servants were like the suspicious king, and had indeed excited his suspicions. (*Vide* Introd. ad. Ps. lxix.) How

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many lies and calumnies may they not have concocted while they stood on the watch! But God, who will hold the proud heathen in derision, will equally laugh at them. Though the heavens are high above the earth, his ear yet reacheth to the earth; and whether mischief be talked of aloud or low, nothing escapes his ear.

V. 10, 11. Deprived of personal strength, he looks to *that* defence which constitutes his strength. He who *who* makes but one step to meet God is met by *his* mercy for thousands of miles.

V. 12. The benefits which God now and then confers upon one and another ought never to be forgotten by us: we should always remember the arm which reached out of the clouds in the hour of danger. But as even the pious are prone to forget nothing more quickly than this very thing, David prays God not suddenly to consume them, but only to scatter and humiliate them, that they may for ever remember that the *Lord* did bow them down, and that *he* is the shield of his people. By "my people" David probably means the generation of the righteous, which is called the people of God, (cf. ad. Ps. iii. 9; Ps. xiv. 4,) thinking of the sincere Israelites with whom he was then staying, viz. Samuel and the sons of the prophets. He felt himself in fellowship with them by saying, "O Lord, *our* shield." (Psalm lxxii. 10.)

V. 13—15. He considers once more their impiousness, for the purpose of strengthening his conviction that the punishment of God, though delayed, will assuredly be revealed to them, for the government of God is preëminently manifest to Jacob after the spirit. (Ps. xxiv. 6.) The sin of their mouth, the curses by which they persecute the innocent, their pride before God and man, shall become the net in which, like so many before them, they shall be caught. Their present punishment shall be this: they shall roam about greedy of prey, but find none, and shall in the evening behold that the spoil has escaped them.

V. 16—18. They had to wander about when evening came, having lost the prey, and hungry wake through the night; while David, like a bird which has escaped the snare of the fowler, attunes in the morning his song of praise to Him who in the day of need is the refuge of his people.

PSALM LX.

A SONG of complaint and cry for help when, while David was engaged in the north of his kingdom against the Syrians of Zobah and their allies from Mesopotamia, (2 Sam. x. 16,) the Edomites

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had invaded the south, and he was obliged to send Joab and Abishai* his brother with an army to meet them, who turned them back (2 Sam. viii. 13; 1 Chron. xviii.) in the valley of Salt,† where the boundaries of Edom and Palestine met. There were probably only few troops in the kingdom, and they had been beat, (v. 12.) It was this critical juncture which determined David to send back his generals with so large a portion of his army. Two short days' marches would suffice to bring the Edomites to Hebron, and seven hours from Hebron to Jerusalem. The king had therefore good grounds for complaining that the country was trembling. The foe had probably made further advances into the country, and only on Joab's approach retired from the mountains and ravines on the way to Hebron to the valley of Salt, where at a later period Amaziah routed the Edomites. (2 Kings xiv. 7.)

1.2 TO the chief Musician, to the tune, "The lily of the testimony," A golden psalm of David to be learnt by heart: when he strove with Mesopotamia and the Syrians of Zobah, when Joab returned and smote of Edom in the valley of Salt twelve thousand.

3 O God thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us,
Thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.
4 Thou hast made the country to tremble; thou hast broken it:
Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.
5 Thou hast showed thy people hard things:
Thou hast made us to drink of the wine of astonishment.
6 Thou hast given a banner to them that feared thee,
To which they may flee because of the truth. Selah.
7 That thy beloved may be delivered;
Save *with* thy right hand, and hear me (or, "hear us".)
8 God hath spoken in his holiness
I will rejoice thereat, "I will divide Schechem,
And mete out the valley of Succoth.
9 Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine:
Ephraim also *is* the shield of mine head;
Judah *is* my sceptre; and

* Abishai, who is described as a general (1 Chron. xviii.) may at that time (as 2 Sam. x. 10) have commanded a portion under Joab. But (2 Sam. viii. 13) the king himself is described as victor.

† This valley is at the southern point of the Dead Sea, at the side of a remarkable mountain side of mineral salt, which at some places is as high as 150 feet. (Robinson's Palestine, vol. iii. 1, p. 23.)

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10 Moab *is* my washpot;
Over Edom will I cast out my shoe;
Philistia, triumph thou because of me."*
11 Who will bring me *into* the strong city?
Who will lead me into Edom?
12 *Wilt* not thou, O God, *which* hadst cast us off?
And *thou*, O God, *which* didst not go out with our armies?
13 Give us help from trouble:
For vain *is* the help of man.
14 Through God we shall do valiantly:
For he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

V. 3—5. The course of life alternates between the heights and the depths. Such was the experience of David. At the pinnacle of triumph, enlarging the boundaries of his country, the mournful tidings suddenly came upon him. He describes the country as a wall which has been shaken and rent, and the consternation of the people as if they were drunk with intoxicating wine and had almost lost their senses.

V. 6, 7. There is a banner, however, to which those who fear the Lord may fly. Such are the gracious promises of God, which he will not dishonour, but fulfil because of his mercy and truth. (Rom. xv. 8.) David doubts not for a moment that although called to endure great affliction they continue to abide in the love of God. That may have been a difficult thing to them of old—but it is an easy thing to those in the Gospel dispensation, who have the words of reconciliation in their hearts.

V. 8—10. The prophetic words of Samuel, Gad, and Nathan, had often declared the kindly designs of God respecting David, and their words were diffused among all the people: *e. g.* Abner refers to them before the whole nation. (2 Sam. iii. 18.) David comforts himself now with such a Divine message by the mouth of a prophet—he rejoices in tribulation. The meaning of that utterance is this: God, who has created all nations, the earth and everything in it, has the power to distribute, as he pleases, the countries of Israel as well as the countries of surrounding peoples. This oracle mentions, first, two then flourishing cities, Succoth, in the valley of Jordan in the East, and Schechem opposite to it in the West, then two of the most flourishing provinces in the east of Jordan; rich Gilead, and the mighty tribe of Manasseh, to the west of Jordan, the two most powerful tribes; Ephraim, the protecting helmet of the kingdom by its rich population, (Gen. xlviii. 19; Deut. xxxiii. 17;) and Judah, of whom Jacob's prophecy was said, "The *sceptre* shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver

* Or paraphrased, "Philistia, shout to me, the Conqueror."

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from between his feet, until Shiloh come." (Gen. xlix. 10.) They are *the Lord's*. But also the countries of enemies shall serve—Moab in the East, Edom in the South, and Philistia in the West (the North is not mentioned, because the banner of David had already been victorious there.) As after the labours of the day the hero takes the washpot and throws off his shoes—so Moab becomes his washpot, and over Edom he casts his shoe—which in ancient times, in India as well as in Abyssinia and Palestine, was the symbol of conquest. (Ruth iv. 7.) Philistia also shall render homage to Him. Such was the burden of the prophecy.

V. 11, 12. This is the banner to which David flies. Contemplating it, we may confidently hope that the same God who did abase can also raise him. His hand shall lead him even to Petra, (*i. e.* rock, 2 Kings xiv. 7,) which seems unapproachable by human strength. That marvellous rock-city of the Edomites is surrounded by rocks, some of which are three hundred feet high, and a single path twelve feet in width leads to it. The city itself is partly hewn out of the cloven rocks, and its ruins, which, however, belong to a later period, fill travellers with amazement. Obadiah, prophesying against Edom, has mentioned that rocky stronghold. "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." (Obad. v. 3, 4.) He who like David appropriates the Divine promise, is not dismayed at even such a rocky stronghold. At the eve of his life the old hero-king used to sing at the remembrance of conquests like the present, "By thee I have run through a troop, and by my God have I leaped over a wall." (Ps. xviii. 30.)

V. 13, 14. Who is more proud of the arm of flesh than a hero in the sense of his own strength? Not so David. He has just now experienced once more that it is God who is able to exalt and to abase him, and he therefore loudly declares that the help of man is vain, and that the victories of heroes are gained through God alone.

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PSALM LXI.

A PSALM of David, sung at Mahanain, beyond Jordan on the borders of Palestine, when he fled from before Absalom. (Cf. ad. Psalm iii. 42.)

1 TO the chief Musician, *A Psalm* on the harp of David.

2 Hear my cry, O God;
Attend unto my prayer.
3 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed:
Lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I.
4 For thou hast been a shelter for me,
And a strong tower from the enemy.
5 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever:
I will make my refuge in the covert of thy wings. Selah.
6 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows:
Thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name.
7 Thou wilt prolong the king's life:
And his years as many generations.
8 He shall abide before God for ever:
O prepare (or, "show unto him") mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him.
9 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever,
That I may daily perform my vows.

V. 2—5. David seems to have sung this psalm in an hour when his soul was more composed: it contains much trust and assurance that he should reascend his throne. Remote from the sanctuary, he feels himself prompted from afar to call upon his God. He regards his fear as great waves, and his trust in God like a lofty rock rising above them; he regards his enemies as if assailing him, and his God as a tower which he can enter and abide there in security. He has so frequently enjoyed happiness in the tabernacle of God that there he shelters himself, feeling as safe as a chicken under the wing of the hen. (Psalm xxvii. 5; xxxi. 21.)

V. 6—9. The heritage (*i. e.* reward, Job xxxi. 2; cf. Wisd. v. 5; Gal. iii. 18,) of those that fear the Lord is his rich mercy, and if that is rich to all who call upon him, how much more so to a king whose cause is a just one. Full of this confidence, David calls upon his God, he himself reminding him of his royal dignity. (Psalm xviii. 51; xxi. 2; xxviii. 8, 9; lxiii. 12.) The glorious promise which he received by Nathan, the prophet, arises before his soul, "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

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(2 Sam. vii. 16.) This promise and the hope that he and his offspring shall for ever occupy the throne before the face of the Lord yields him comfort, while he regards the faithfulness and love of God as the defences to the right and to the left of his throne. He promises nevermore to forget that he owes these blessings neither to his own sagacity and valour nor to blind fate, but that he will for ever sing praises to the name of the Lord, and that his whole life shall be the payment of the vows which he made in the hour of need.

PSALM LXII.

A PSALM of calm trust and exhortation, which David composed when he resided at the court of Saul, and calumniating tongues accused him of secret conspiracy, thereby seeking to rob him of the king's confidence, and to cast him down from his elevated position.

1 TO the chief Musician of the choir of Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.
2 Truly my soul is silent to God:
From him *cometh* my salvation.
3 He only *is* my rock and my salvation;
He is my defence: I shall not be greatly moved.
4 How long will ye press upon a man,
And seek to destroy him all of you:
As a bowing wall *and as* a tottering fence?
5 They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency:
They delight in lies:
They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.
Selah.
6 My soul, be thou silent only to God;
For my hope *is* from him.
7 He only *is* my rock and my salvation:
He is my defence; I shall not be moved.
8 With God *is* my salvation and my glory:
The rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God.
9 Trust in him at all times, ye people,
Pour out your heart before him:
God *is* a refuge for us. Selah.
10 Surely men of low degree *are* nothing,
And men of high degree *are* a lie:
To be laid in the balance,
They *are* altogether *lighter* than nothing.

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11 Trust not in wrong,
And become not vain in robbery:
If riches increase, set not your heart *upon them.*
12 God hath spoken once:
Twice have I heard this;
THAT POWER BELONGETH UNTO GOD.
13 Also unto thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy:
For thou renderest to every man according to his work.

V. 2—5. On fathoming in the process of self-examination the very foundations of our soul, we sometimes comfort ourselves as it were with the words, There is still a little spark of faith and trust left. So David solaces and strengthens himself with the words, My soul is quietly resigned to God and waits for his aid. I know of no other help—and though perchance I stumble—I shall never fall. I am already crushed like a tottering wall, but however much you may press upon me, I shall never fall. He intimates to them, that though their assaults are not done openly, he is right well aware of their secret efforts to undermine his safety.

V. 6—9. He once more descends to the foundation of his soul. Calmness has already ensued, yet he seeks to attain a still greater peace. How great is the happiness of this inward calm. What others seek in the creature he seeks in the Almighty. His salvation, glory, strength, and refuge are all in God, who gives to creation whatever happiness, glory, strength, and refuge it can yield to mortals. How great is his happiness in that calm of his soul! He invites all to pour out their heart before the Eternal One that they may enjoy the same peace.

V. 10—13. Our estimate of man depends upon our estimate of God. David knows that men of low and high degree, if separated from the primal fount of every good, weigh *nothing*, and are less than nothing. Riches are nothing, especially ill-gotten ones. Man is not to get proud when riches increase. But such is the course of things, that in proportion as the gifts of God are rich, men confide more in the gifts than in the rich giver. But holy David is better instructed. Once and again he has heard the Divine voice in his soul, *that power belongeth unto God only*, (Job xxxiii. 14; cf. Psalm xl. 5.) This powerful God is merciful: can then any merit attach to our poor works? and yet the Lord rendereth to every pious man according to his imperfect pious work.

PSALM LXIII.

A PSALM of David composed on his flight before Absalom, after he had left Jerusalem, and having reached the desert banks of

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Jordan, was waiting for further news from the city. (2 Sam. xv. 23. 28; xvi. 2; xvii. 16. 29.) The place is a profound wilderness. The wilderness of Judah, along the entire western shore of the Dead Sea, had been David's refuge for years, when Saul pursued him. Once adorned with the diadem, he may have little thought that he should have to revisit that desert. But as a fugitive king, he was obliged to seek it once more. The wilderness of Judah extends to Jordan above the Dead Sea, where the territories of Judah and Benjamin meet, (cf. Josh. xviii. 22, with xv. 61)*— it is a waste without any supply of water. In that neighbourhood there remains an easy ford to the present day, and probably David and his people crossed the river there. Gilgal was situate in that region, and this is the place where David on his return from Mahanaim crossed Jordan. (2 Sam. xix. 15.)

1 A PSALM of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.
2 O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee:
My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee
In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;
3 To see thy power and thy glory,
So *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary.
4 Because thy lovingkindness *is* better than life,
My lips shall praise thee.
5 Thus will I bless thee while I live:
I will lift up my hands in thy name.
6 My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness;
And my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips:
7 When I remember thee upon my bed
I meditate on thee in the *night* watches.
8 Because thou hast been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.
9 My soul cleaveth to thee:
Thy right hand upholdeth me.
10 But those *that* seek my soul to destroy *it*,
Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
11 They shall fall by the sword:
They shall be a portion for jackals.
12 But the king shall rejoice in God;
Every one that sweareth by him shall glory:
But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

* There were no signs of vegetation either along the upper coast or in the valley, with the exception of a narrow strip of reeds and rushes below, along either side of the basin, here and there dotted with tamarisks and a species of the Arabian willow. (Robinson's Palestine, vol. ii. p. 495.)

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V. 2. He begins as every prayer that is to be heard ought to begin; the *power* of prayer consists in the knowledge that God is *our* God. The body suffers in a dry and thirsty land; his friends indeed had to furnish him with refreshments for the period of his abode in the desert. (2 Sam. xvi. 2.) But the king's soul thirsts more for God than bodily refreshments. His very flesh longs for him. Is it not known to every prayerful man, that when God refreshes the soul, he also refreshes the body?

V. 3—5. Here is the reason of his longing for God. He remembers the delightful experience of his power and glory in the sanctuary. "*Thus* have I seen thee," *i. e.* so desirable, so refreshing to body and soul. We know from other psalms, that David felt most at home with God in the house of God. (Cf. ad. Psalm xxvii.) 2 Sam. xv. 25, informs us that on leaving Jerusalem, the hope of seeing again the tabernacle and the house of God formed the pinnacle of David's desires. As life is valueless without the taste of Divine mercy, David glories that his lovingkindness is better than life, and because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, therefore his lips shall praise him. He has known him as so desirable to be possessed, that he promises to make his praise the business of his life. Praying, he lifts up his hands in the name of the Lord, *i. e.* with his heart and mind fixed on him.

V. 6, 7. How happy may the heart of man become through God! There was no other ground for the praise of David. The crown torn from off his brow—his own son a rebel—a gloomy present and an uncertain future stood before his soul—round about him the desert; but his heart is so satisfied that his mouth must break forth in songs of praise. Such is his employment in day-time, and at night, when the mouth must be silent, his heart continues the praise. He thinks not to go again asleep, but continues in meditation during the night watches—there are three of them—as soon as the thought of God has once entered his soul.

V. 8, 9. Hope in his present tribulation causes him unceasingly to think of God. As a bird, sheltered in the rich foliage from the heat of the sun, sings its merry notes, so he celebrates his songs of praise from the shadow of the wings of God. He feels as if the eternal God were visibly present, upholding him with his right hand, therefore his soul cleaves to him.

V. 10, 11. They who seek to destroy his life shall meet with the fate they have planned for him. The sword shall consume them in the war which was about to begin—their bodies shall remain unburied, the prey of jackals which feed on corpses. And this came literally to pass. For in the battle, in the forest of Ephraim, one portion of the people were consumed by the sword, and another perished in the wooded rocks and abysses. (2 Sam. xviii. 8.)

V. 12. The mouth of the faithless rebels is now filled with deceit

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and lies, but it shall be stopped—the king shall yet rejoice in his God—commend and praise those faithful subjects, who will swear by no other name than that of their lawful sovereign. (Cf. Gen. xlii. 15.) "The Lord reigneth!"

PSALM LXIV.

A song of complaint of David, when he was at the court of Saul, and calumniating and lying tongues sought his downfall.

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

2 Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer:
Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
3 Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked:
From the throng of the workers of iniquity,
4 Who whet their tongue like a sword,
And bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows, *even* bitter words:
5 That they may shoot in secret at the godly:
Suddenly do they shoot at him and fear not.
6 They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter:
They commune of laying snares privily;
They say, "Who shall see them?"
7 They search out iniquities;
"We are ready with diligent cunning."
Both the inward *thought* of every one *of them*, and the heart, *is* deep.
8 But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow;
Suddenly shall they be wounded.
9 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves:
All that see them shall laugh at them.
10 And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God;
For they shall wisely consider of his doing.
11 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD and shall trust in him;
And all the upright in heart shall glory.

V. 2—5. There is no reference here to his mortal enemies, as is the case in those psalms which were composed during his flight;

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for some considerable time elapsed before the king dared to aim at his life. He simply speaks of such calumniators as laid their snares *in secret*, could not bear his piety, and envied him of the royal confidence.

V. 6, 7. The honest and straightforward youth is surprised at the artifice with which they set their evil engines to work, for an honest man pursues a straight course. "The children of this world are wiser than the children of light." An honest-minded man gets acquainted with the shallows of the heart by perceiving them in others. With the expression of the Psalmist accord the words of the prophet, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9.)

V. 8, 9. The wisdom of God exceeds the utmost cunning of men; he changeth their wisdom into folly, and overturneth their measure when it is filled.

V. 10, 11. God does not exercise his judgments for the gratification of our passions or revenge, but with the sublime and holy design to instruct us that his hand pierces the doings of man, and that the works of men, even of the ungodly, must serve him as instruments for the accomplishment of his own purposes; that the righteous may ever rejoice in heart for being under the jurisdiction of such a Lord; and lastly, that the community of believers should render to him the praises which he is worthy to receive. We must, therefore, be on our guard, lest in rejoicing at the downfall of the ungodly by the hand of God, we dim the sacred flame by unholy feelings.

PSALM LXV.

A SONG of praise composed in the spring, when the Lord had richly blessed the land, the pastures were beginning to be clothed with flocks, and the hills and valleys covered with corn. It was probably sung at the passover, for a sheaf of the first fruits used to be offered on the second day of the passover, after which harvest commenced. Verses 2—9 are the preparation for the theme of the psalm; the grace of prayer (v. 2, 3,) is followed by the confession of sins (v. 4,) the expression of gratitude for spiritual delights in the sanctuary (v. 5,) the recognition of Divine power and mercy in nature amongst men (v. 6—8,) with the final praise of peculiarly merciful revelations in the kingdom of nature, for which they *now* return their thanks (v. 9—12.)

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1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm *and* Song of David.

2 Praise is silently offered to thee, O God, in Sion:*
And unto thee shall the vow be performed.
3 O thou that hearest prayer,
Unto thee shall all flesh come.
4 Iniquities oppress me:
Our sins, cover thou them.
5 Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest,
And causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts:
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house,
Even of thy holy temple.
6 Hear us according to thy marvellous righteousness,
O God of our salvation.
Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth,
And of them that are afar off *by* the sea:
7 Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains;
Being girded with power.
8 Which stilleth the noise of the seas,
The noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.
9 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens:
Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.†
10 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it:
Thou greatly enrichest it with the well of God, *which* is full of water:
Thou preparest them corn,
When thou hast so provided for it.
11 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly:
Thou causest rain to enter the furrows thereof:
Thou makest it soft with showers:
Thou blessest the springing thereof.
12 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness;
And thy paths drop fatness.
13 They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness.
And the little hills are girded with joy.
14 The pastures are clothed with flocks;
The valleys also are covered over with corn;
They shout for joy, they also sing.

* Or, "Thou art praised with silent resignation in Sion, O God."
† Or, "Thou makest glad all that live in the East and in the West."

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V. 2, 3. David names the two sacrifices of the pious, which are demanded in Psalm l., adding the important point, that the voice of our own will must be silent. (Isaiah xxx. 15.) For many praise God for those things which are in conformity to their own inclinations. The reason of the scanty exhibition of praise and thanksgiving, is that everything is not sufficiently received as from the hand of the Lord. These spiritual sacrifices are offered in Zion. Though all prayers, even those which men direct to fictitious deities, are known to the true God (for which reason the Psalmist adds, "Unto thee shall all flesh come," cf. v. 6,) yet real prayer always presupposes the existence of right knowledge and genuine faith. Such sacrifices receives the Lord in Zion, as nowhere else on earth.

V. 4, 5. Every prayer should begin with the confession that our lips are unclean, for without that conviction no one is able in humble reverence to realize before God the grace of being *permitted* to pray. But it must not stop there, for the heart which groans under the weight of the heavy stone called *sin*, cannot mount to heaven. The stone must be removed, and the removal is effected by *grace* and *forgiveness*. It is impossible that the voice of prayer can pierce the heavens, if we cannot say with a lightened heart, "*My* God." The heart is constantly wavering "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed," (James i. 6,) while there is any doubt left that God is *my* God. So David desires the *forgiveness of sins*, before he begins to *thank* and *praise*. As a sinner who has enjoyed grace, he is with the congregation alive to the unmerited gift of the Lord of their being permitted to call upon him in this place where rich consolation flows in such copious streams. The temple and the house of God either designate the tabernacle, or the place where the ark stood. (See ad. Ps. xv. on the courts, cf. ad. Ps. lxxxiv. 2.)

V. 6—9. Before expressing their gratitude for the peculiar blessing which hurried them to the house of God, their mind rises to the contemplation of the wonderful works of God. They distinctly declare that all the blessings and comforts of all the nations of the earth flow from *this fountain*. It implies the confession that the prayers of the heathen, however erroneous their ideas of God may be, do after all ascend to the throne of the God of Israel. It has been expressly pointed out by a prophet, that the same paternal hand which brought Israel out of Egypt, did also lead and bless pagan nations. (Amos ix. 7, in agreement with Ps. lxvii. 5.) God has displayed his powerful arm in nature as well as in history; he has given roots to the mountains that they move not; he stilleth the noise of the waves of the sea (Ps. xlvi. 4; xciii. 3,) and of the nations. These manifestations of the works of God scatter simultaneously fear and joy to the ends of the earth.

V. 10, 11. This God reveals himself as *Omnipotent* at the

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return of every spring, and uses his might for the *bestowal of blessings*. He opens the flood-gates of heaven—sends wholesome showers from autumn, when the early rain falls, down to spring, when the fruit of the field begins to bud and to spring up and needs the latter rain. The wells and the channels of water which men dig, dry up, but the well of God gets never exhausted though it have much land to water. Thus the corn of men gets prepared The furrows get humid, the water presses them down, and genial showers soften everything, and lo, the blessing of God waves in its golden beauty!

V. 12—14. The goodness of God crowns the year as a diadem does the brow. Men find out his goings by the blessing of his paths. The pastures of the wilderness are clothed with verdant richness—the very hills are girded with joy and gladness. Jocund flocks clothe the pastures as with a garment—the corn waves in the valleys so richly that the soil cannot be seen. Are these rejoicings of nature to find no echo in the human heart? Yes; they vie in their rejoicings, their rejoicings swell into praise and happy harvest songs.

PSALM LXVI.

MANY interpreters consider v. 9—12 descriptive of the sufferings in the exile at Babylon, and the psalm expressive of gratitude for deliverance. It militates against this view, that v. 13—20 are spoken by an individual, who ascribes that deliverance to his prayer, and is able to say of himself, that he has not regarded iniquity in his heart, while the nation looked at the exile as the punishment of their sins. (Cf. ad. Ps. xliv.; cvi. 6.) The individual who here expresses the gratitude of a whole nation for their deliverance, regarding it as an answer to his prayers, cannot be any other than king Hezekiah, who lay in fervent prayer before the Lord when the Assyrians were besieging Jerusalem, (2 Kings xix. 15,) to whom the Lord sent Isaiah, saying, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard." (2 Kings xix. 20; cf. Ps. xlvi. 48.) It appears from Isaiah xxxviii. 9, that Hezekiah used to compose psalms. The fundamental sentiment of the Psalmist is joy—and joy so great that he invites all the earth to share it with him, (v. 1—4.) From the wonderful works of God in the present, he reverts to the imperishable deeds of God in the past, and thence infers that the entire history of the world is under his almighty power, (v. 5—7.) He approaches the object of his joy, and praises the mighty deliverance, (v. 8—12.) But he forgets not his own

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gratitude, and fulfils the vows which he made in the time of need, (v. 13—15.) He shows also the ground of the answer to his prayers, namely, that God hears the prayers of the upright, (v. 16—20.)

TO the chief Musician, a Song *or* Psalm.

1 Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:
2 Sing forth the honour of his name:
Make his praise glorious.
3 Say unto God, How terrible* *are* thy works!
Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies render homage unto thee.
4 All the earth shall worship thee,
And shall sing unto thee; they shall sing *to* thy name. Selah.
5 Come and see the works of God:
He is terrible *in his* doing toward the children of men.
6 He turned the sea into dry *land:*
They went through the flood on foot:
Thereat do we rejoice in him.
7 He ruleth by his power for ever;
His eyes behold the nations:
The rebellious dare not exalt themselves. Selah.
8 O bless our God, ye peoples,
And make the voice of his praise to be heard:
9 Which putteth our souls into life,
And suffereth not our feet to be moved.
10 For thou, O God, hast proved us:
Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.
11 Thou broughtest us into the net;
Thou laidest affliction upon our loins.
12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads;
We went through fire and through water:
But thou broughtest us out to a *place of refreshing.*
13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings;
I will pay thee my vows,
14 Which my lips have uttered,
And my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams;
I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.

* Terrible, *i. e.* "So marvellous as to excite terror."

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16 Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God,
And I will declare what he hath done for my soul.
17 I cried unto him with my mouth,
And praise lay beneath my tongue.
18 If I had regarded iniquity in my heart,
The LORD would not have heard me:
19 *But* verily God hath heard *me:*
He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.
20 Blessed *be* God, which hath not turned away my prayer,
Nor his mercy from me.

V. 1—4. The humiliation of proud Sennacherib, whose empire extended from the interior of Asia to Egypt, before the walls of Jerusalem, was an event which, as has been shown in the remarks on Psalm xlvi. and xlviii., spread gladness throughout all the surrounding countries. The Psalmist could, therefore, not without good grounds, invite all the earth to sing praise to the name of the Lord. Hezekiah had supplicated God in the hour of need: "Now, therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only." (Isaiah xxxvii. 20.) To God alone they ascribe the victory: it was neither bow, nor spear, nor any other earthly weapon, but the Lord from heaven who fought. The God who did perform that miracle is the God of old—the same God who led Israel with dry feet out of Egypt and across Jordan. Faith regards these records not as old but as new, and on that account daily experiences them as new. When conquering hosts advance it seems as if God were not noticing them; but the Psalmist comforts the congregation by declaring that "his eyes behold the nations," and that "he ruleth by his power for ever," that it may be known that nobody possesses power on earth save he to whom the Lord has delegated it, and that it is only to be wielded as long as he is willing to give it.

V. 5—12. Where has the Lord manifested himself as he has done before the walls of Zion? The Psalmist invites even the heathen nations to join in Israel's songs of praise. He then describes their tribulation. The Assyrians had partly carried their fenced cities, imposed a heavy tax on the nation, and compelled Hezekiah to empty the temple-treasury. (2 Kings xviii. 15, 16.) But all to no purpose. The hostile army continued in the land for the space of two years; the fields could not be sowed—famine oppressed the nation. (Isaiah xxxvii. 30.) They were obliged to listen to taunting language against the king, the people, and the God of Israel. (Isaiah xxxvi. 18, 19.) Isaiah upbraided Sennacherib by telling him that God had long ago resolved upon that calamity by his determinate counsel: "Hast thou not heard

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long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up." (Isaiah xxxvii. 26, 27.) The Psalmist might indeed say that he and his nation had been translated out of death into life, their foot had been in the net, and their shoulders burdened; that they had gone through fire and through water, (Isaiah xliii. 2; Ezek. xv. 6, 7;) and that men, who knew not that human power is derived from God, had haughtily ridden over their heads. (Isaiah lvii. 23; Lam. v. 5.) The bard declares also that they had been cast into the crucible and tried as silver. With this accords the prediction of Isaiah, "Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin." (Isaiah xxxi. 6, 7.) But "the Lord, who killeth and maketh alive, who bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up," (1 Sam. ii. 6,) did also bring them up out of that grave.

V. 13—15. We read in 2 Kings xix. 15, that Hezekiah in his need went not to man, but prayed before the Lord, saying, "O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down thine ear and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only." Though there are found but few whose *thanksgivings* equal the warmth of their petitions, Hezekiah at least determines not to continue in the debt of God, and to offer his choicest possessions upon the altar of the Lord.

V. 16—20. Can he be silent who has made experience like this? No, the experience of every individual pious man is the common possession of all. The mouth of Hezekiah was uttering prayer, when through his trust songs of praise were under his tongue. He is aware that prayer must be the expression of an *honest* heart. In supplicating the throne of God the eye must not throw side-glances at earthly supports. Such prayers the Lord will hear and grant.

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PSALM LXVII.

THE hope of the conversion of the world forms the theme of this psalm.

1 TO the chief Musician on the harp, A Psalm *or* Song.

2 God be merciful unto us and bless us;
And cause his face to shine upon us. Selah.
3 That thy way may be known upon earth,
Thy salvation among all the heathen.
4 Let the people praise thee, O God;
Let all the people praise thee.
5 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy:
Because thou judgest the people righteously,
And leadest the nations upon earth. Selah.
6 Let the people praise thee, O God;
Let all the people praise thee.
7 The earth yieldeth her increase;
And God, *even* our own God, shall bless us.
8 God shall bless us;
And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

V. 2, 3. This is the blessing which Aaron, the high priest, pronounced, in the days of hoary antiquity, upon Israel. (Numb. vi. 24.) The *shining* countenance of God on his people is a *gracious* one, the lustre of which refreshes the hearts, and pours blessings on all the ways of the people. The blessings of God on Israel were manifold: the more spiritual ones used to be spiritually understood: the Psalmist, therefore, prays for the most spiritual of all blessings, *that the salvation of God might rise in Israel, and its lustre shine upon all the nations of the earth.* He remembered the Divine promise made to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed:" and in a most disinterested manner prayed for his people a blessing, which simultaneously involves the salvation of the world, as the Lord says, "Salvation is of (or from) the Jews." The way of the Lord, which is here referred to, is none other than that of which Isaiah prophesied, saying, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow into it, and many people shall go and say, 'Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his *ways*,

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and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. ii. 2, 3; cf. Ps. cx. 2.)

V. 4. Now they call upon him by many and false names, but in that day there shall be one Lord and his name one. (Zech. xiv. 9.) "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. (Zeph. iii. 9.)

V. 5. Then shall the nations know the Lord, to whom now they have built altars as to the unknown God! (Acts xvii. 23.) They have already enjoyed benefits and blessings from the God of Israel: but they thanked Baalim, Moloch, and Jupiter for them. Amos asks, "Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" (Amos ix. 7,) that his own people might know that the God of Israel equally determines the destinies of the heathen. The heathen themselves shall know it, when their days shall have come.

V. 6. The heart of the Psalmist rejoices at the thought, that the day shall come, when all the prayers and songs of praise which ascend to heaven shall praise only one name. In the days of David there were about five million souls in the narrow borders of Israel, who did lift their hands to the living God. Now hundreds of millions from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same call upon his name, though the full *completion* of the Psalmist's hope has not yet arrived.

V. 7. Many commentators interpret "the increase of the earth," of the fruit of the field; but the Psalmist can only have figurativly spoken of the fruit of the field in this connection. He intended to designate by it the multiform spiritual and temporal blessings which should then appear. Hosea prophecies in the same sense, placing temporal and spiritual blessings in juxtaposition. "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel (*i. e.* the Israel sown by God.) And I will sow her unto me in the earth, and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to not my people, Thou art my people; and they shalt say, Thou art my God." (Hos. ii. 21—23.) As the same prophet says elsewhere: "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the memorial thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. *From me is thy fruit found.*" (Hos. xiv. 6—9.)

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V. 8. Yes, the Lord shall be to Israel like a bright refreshing fountain; but his blessing is the blessing of the world, and there shall be channels made so that waters may stream forth unto all the lands of the earth.

PSALM LXVIII.

A SUBLIME psalm to the praise of God. Its ancient origin appears from the character of its language.* The authorship of David is confirmed by verse 28, which represents the twelve tribes as still united: after the division of the kingdom they did no more conjointly worship in the temple, and after the captivity of the tribes the former kingdom could not be mentioned, since individuals only did return.† The occasion of the psalm may be conceived as a gained victory, from which the ark was brought home to Zion. (Cf. Introduction ad. Ps. xlvii.)

The opening verses (v. 2—7) celebrate in the words of Moses the victorious power of Jehovah: verses 8—15 praise the manifestations of Divine protection and triumphant strength in the early days of the nation: and (v. 16—19) Mount Zion where the Lord God of Israel, having humbled his enemies, has fixed his abode, mighty and glorious as once on Sinai. Verses 20—24 praise the future hopes of Israel from such a God. In verses 25—28 the details of the procession arrest the attention of the Psalmist; and verses 29—32 stretch beyond the final victories of all the enemies of the kingdom of God. Cf. ad. Psalm xlvii. lxxvi.) The final strophe (v. 33—36) exhorts all the nations of the earth to worship this God.

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm *or* Song of David.

2 Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered:
Let them also that hate him flee before him.
3 As smoke *is* driven away, so drive *them* away:
As wax melteth before the fire,
So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

* To judge from the antiquity of its language, the concise description, the thoroughly, fresh, forcible, and occasional artlessly ironical expression of its poetry, we consider this poem as one of the most ancient monuments of Hebrew poetry.—*Boettcher.*

† Ps. lx. 9. The mention of the separate tribes is a mark of the antiquity of the psalm.

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4 But let the righteous be glad;
Let them rejoice before God:
Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.
5 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name;
Extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH.*
And rejoice before him.
6 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,
Is God in his holy habitation.
7 God setteth the exiled into their homes,
He bringeth out the captives,
But causeth the rebellious to dwell in the desert.
8 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people.
When thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:
9 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God.
That Sinai *shook* at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
10 Thou, O God, didst shake out a gracious rain,
Whereby thou didst refresh thine inheritance, when it was weary.
11 Thy congregation dwelt therein:
Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.
12 The LORD gave the word (word of victory?)
Great *was* the company of those that published it, (or, messengers of victory to the great army.")
13 Kings of armies did flee apace:
And she that tarried at home divided the spoil.
14 When ye shall lie (again) among your borders (border stones,)
Ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver,
And her feathers with yellow gold.
15 When the Almighty scattered kings in it,
It was *white* as snow in Salmon.
16 Ye mountains of God, ye mountains of Bashan,
Ye high mountains, ye mountains of Bashan,
17 Why, O ye high mountains, why do ye blink
At the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in?
Yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.

* Or, "Make way for him, who rideth through the plain, Jehovah is his name, rejoice before him."

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18 The chariots of God *are* many thousands and thousands
of angels:
The LORD *is* among them *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place*.
19 Thou hast ascended on high,
Thou hast led captivity captive:
Thou hast received gifts from men;*
Yea, the rebellious also shall dwell with the LORD God.
20 Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits*,
Even the God of our salvation. Selah.†
21 *He that is* our God *is* the God of salvation;
And unto God the Lord *belong* the issues from death.‡
22 But God shall wound the head of his enemies,
And the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in
his trespasses.
23 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan,
I will bring *them* again from the depths of the sea:
24 That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine* ene-
mies,
And the tongue of thy dogs in the same.
25 They have seen thy goings, O God;
Even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.
26 The singers went before, the players on instruments
followed after;
Among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.
27 "Bless ye God in the congregations,
Even the LORD, from the fountain of Israel."
28 There *is* little Benjamin *with* their ruler,
The princes of Judah *and* their council,
The princes of Zebulun, *and* the princes of Naphtali.
29 Thy God hath commanded thy strength:
Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.
30 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem
Shall kings bring presents unto thee.
31 Rebuke the beast of the reed,
The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people,§

* Or, "In men," *i. e.* men themselves as gifts.

† Or, "The God who bears for us, is our help."

‡ Luther renders, "And the Lord God, who delivereth from death." But E. V. is more correct. Cf. Ps. xlviii. 15.

§ The beast of the reeds is the lion, concealed in the reeds of Jordan, (Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44; Zech. xi. 3.) Lions and bulls denote strong nations, the calves the lesser tribes.

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Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver;*
Scatter thou the people *that* delight in war.
32 Princes shall come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.
33 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth;
O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah:
34 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens from everlasting:
Lo, he doth send out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.†
35 Ascribe ye strength unto God:
His excellency *is* over Israel,
And his strength *is* in the clouds.
36 O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places:
The God of Israel *is* he that giveth strength and power unto *his* people.
Blessed *be* God.

V. 2—7. The invocation, which the priests used to sing (Numb. x. 35,) in the days of Moses when the ark set forward, had become verified in this instance. It is indeed a theme which in ever new variations is being repeated at different epochs in the history of the kingdom of God, until the final judgment shall absorb and complete all the preceding judgments of God. Verse 5 alludes to the eastern custom of levelling the roads before monarchs on their journeys, (Isaiah xl. 3, 4.) The ark of the Lord in the procession must not be lost sight of.

V. 8—15. Proofs of Divine government are adduced from the history of Israel. The power and guardian care of God had become evident in the miracles, (Exod. xix. 18; Lev. iv. 11; Psalm cxiv. 6.) on *that*‡ Sinai, in the blessings which revived the fainting people during their forty years' leadings in the wilderness, and finally in the victories by which the holy land became the property of the people of God. The Psalmist remembers Deborah's (Judges v. 4, 5,) song in verses 8, 9. Having in verse 11 referred to the possession of Canaan as a proof of Divine mercy, he remembers, as in Psalm lxxviii. 60, *etc.*, the attacks and humiliations which the nation had to encounter in the days of the Judges, and still lingering on the song of Deborah, speaks of female messengers of victory—for it was customary for women to sing songs of victory, (Exodus xv. 20; 1 Sam. xviii. 6.) To this is added the joyful

* Cf. respecting this construction Gesen. Thes. S. V. רמס against Maurer's objections.

† Or, "Lo! he shall send out his thunder, the thunder of might."

‡ The use of זֶה is peculiar to this passage, and Psalm lxxviii. 54; civ. 25: it indicates a well-known subject.

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employment of the women, to divide the spoil for which the warriors had fought. After wearisome battles the people shall once more abide within their borders, glittering in their conquered gold and silver. The Psalmist next refers to Gideon's victory over the Midianites, the theatre of which lay in the mountains of Ephraim and the surrounding regions. That victory is celebrated in Psalm lxxxiii. The mountain of Salmon is in that district not far from Schechem, which was covered with slain as with flakes of snow.*

V. 16—19. The bard descends from the past to the present. The insignificant mount Zion has attained to an honour distinguishing it above all other mountains, (Isa. ii. 2.) The God of Israel fights with spiritual hosts, (2 Kings vi. 15, 16; Ps. ciii. 20; Judges v. 20;) as he appeared on Sinai in days of yore, so he still ruleth by his might: he has just ascended to Zion, having taken captive his enemies, and received gifts and worship from men: even the rebellious shall submit to him. The apostle Paul applies in Eph. iv. 8—10, this passage to Christ, who ascended to heaven, conquered his opponents, and gave gifts unto men. This is a similar adaptation of the Old Testament as that in Rom. x. 6, 7. The apostle's meaning is, that the God of the Old Testament is also the God of the New Testament: as there the victorious God of Israel ascended on high, so here Christ carrying his own with him as conquered. Paul had just said, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," and connecting with it the citation says, "and *gave* gifts unto men."

V. 20—24. Trust for the future is based on the victory of the present; the Lord will deliver his people from the deepest gulfs—though the foes of Israel lie concealed on the woody heights of Bashan or the depths of the sea, (Cf. Amos ix. 3,) they shall not escape from the hand of the Lord.

V. 25—28. The Psalmist delights in the lovely spectacle of the solemn procession. The choruses of male singers come first, the players on instruments next—men with stringed instruments, the damsels with the tambourines, which in the East to the present day are carried by females. The contents of their songs of praise are stated in brief: they are exhortations to the nation, which since the days of the fathers, *i. e.* the patriarchs, is Jehovah's possession, to make the praise of the Lord their peculiar and continuous occupation. The tribe of David, with the heads of the two northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, are mentioned in lieu of the rest.

V. 29—32. The Lord has taken his abode on Zion and established his kingdom. The divinely inspired Psalmist beholds its infinitely glorious destiny, to incorporate in itself all the nations of

* The snow might probably allude to their numerous silver jewellery. The spoil of jewellery of *gold* is mentioned in Judges viii.

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the earth. We may gather from this passage that the declarations of the prophets concerning war and victories on earth, of gold and silver that shall be brought to Jerusalem, (Psalm lxxii. 10; Isaiah lx. 6, 7,) have fundamentally a spiritual meaning, for we have also in this place an immediate reference to the worship of the only true God, in which the mighty Egypt and the distant Ethiopia shall engage. (Psalm xlvii. 67; Zeph. iii. 10.)

V. 33—35. The Psalmist, as if anxious to demonstrate the necessity of the future worship of the Lord by all the nations of the earth, speaks of his primeval power in heaven, the expression of which mortals hear in the voice of thunder, basing thereon a call upon all the kingdoms of the earth to pay homage to the eternally Almighty Lord. That homage, however glorious, is connected with the acknowledgment of the dignity and destiny of Israel—for Israel is the theatre of his revelation—the people from whom the salvation of God shall flow to the rest of the nations.

PSALM LXIX.

A PLAINTIVE psalm, which must belong to the period when David was still at the court of Saul, for he complains of his *daily acquaintances* (v. 13. 21, 22;) his *piety* is the cause of his reproach (v. 8. 10;) he complains of reproach and derision, not of persecutions unto death. He refers not to the king himself, but to those who persecuted and calumniated him from envy, flattery, and impiousness. (Cf. 1 Sam. xxiv. 10; xxvi. 19; and ad. Ps. vii.) We find in the history of David (1 Sam. xxvi. 19) an invocation of Divine justice against the obdurate in heart, and an imprecation on the delusion of the same parties, of whom he indignantly expresses himself in verse 23, etc.

The figurative allusion to captives in verse 34, renders it probable that this psalm was like many others sung both during the Babylonish captivity, and at the later temple-services with the addition of verses 35—37. (Cf. ad. Ps. xiv. 7; xxv. 22; li. 20, 21.)

The Psalmist begins his song in a profound sense of need, after he had for a long time sent his prayers in vain to heaven (v. 2—4.) Conscious of his innocence he has to endure bitter calumny—men hate in him the cause of God (v. 5—10.) The very grief of his sufferings is the object of derision (v. 11—13.) He seeks for strength in prayer—in prayer to Him who is the secret witness of his reproach and struggles (v. 14—20.) His heart is broken, he is reduced to the bed of languishing, but instead of the food of sympathy they bring him gall and vinegar (v. 21—22.) His indigna-

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tion arises at obduracy so profound: remembering the word of the Lord, "Vengeance is *mine, I* will recompense," (Deut. xxxii. 35,) he is resolved, however, quietly to endure and persevere (v. 30,) but invokes his vengeance of him who has declared that it belongs unto him, (v. 20—29.) His song has made him more calm, he looks forward to the time when to the great delight of the pious he will not only offer visible sacrifices, but those which above all are well-pleasing to the Lord, (Psalm l. 23;) songs of *praise* which flow from a grateful heart, (v. 30—34.)

1 TO the chief Musician, to the tune "the lilies," *A Psalm* of David.
2 Save me, O God;
For the waters are come in unto *my* soul.
3 I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing:
I am come into deep waters, and the floods will sweep me off.
4 I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried:
Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.
5 They that hate me without a cause
Are more than the hairs of mine head:
They that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty:
I shall restore *that* which I took not away:
6 O God, THOU knowest my foolishness;
And my sins are not hid from THEE.
7 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts,
Be ashamed for my sake;
Let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.
8 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach;
Shame hath covered my face.
9 I am become a stranger unto my brethren,
And an alien unto my mother's children.
10 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;
And the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.
11 When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting,
That was to my reproach.
12 I made sackcloth also my garment;
And I became a proverb to them.
13 They that sit in the gate speak against me;
And I *was* the song of the drunkards.

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14 But as for me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O LORD, *in* an
acceptable time:
O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the
truth of thy salvation.
15 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink:
Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of
the deep waters.
16 Let not the waterflood sweep me off,
Nor let the deep swallow me up,
And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.
17 Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness *is* good:
Turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender
mercies.
18 And hide not thy face from thy servant;
For I am in trouble; hear me speedily.
19 Draw nigh unto my soul, *and* redeem it:
Deliver me because of mine enemies.
20 Thou knowest my reproach, and my shame, and my dis-
honour:
Mine adversaries *are* all before thee.
21 Reproach hath broken my heart;
And I am full of heaviness:
And I look *for some* to take pity, but *there is* none;
And for comforters, but I find none.
22 They give me also gall for my meat;
And in my thirst they give me vinegar to drink.
23 Let their table become a snare before them:
And *when they think themselves* in peace, *let it become*
a trap.
24 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not:
And make their loins continually to shake.
25 Pour out thine indignation upon them,
And let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.
26 Let their habitation be desolate;
And let none dwell in their tents.
27 For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten;
And they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast
wounded.
28 Add punishment unto their iniquity:*
And let them not come into thy righteousness.
29 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living,
And not be written with the righteous.

* Or render with Luther, "Let them fall from one sin into another."

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30 But I *am* poor and sorrowful:
Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.
31 I will praise the name of God with a song,
And will magnify him with thanksgiving.
32 *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox
Or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.
33 The humble shall see *this*, *and* be glad:
And your heart shall live that seek God.
34 For the LORD heareth the poor,
And despiseth not his prisoners.

Chorus.

35 Let the heaven and earth praise him,
The seas, and everything that moveth therein.
36 For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah,
That they may dwell there, and have it in possession.
37 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it:
And they that love his name shall dwell therein.

V. 2, 3. As Joseph was cast into the pit by his brothers, (Gen. xxxvii. 24,) as Jeremiah was thrown into the dungeon of mire,* (Jer. xxxviii. 6,) so David regards himself as cast into a pit, in the miry depth of which he is unable to find a standing, while the floods threaten to sweep him away. We hear him as an old man, looking back to *those* days from the royal throne, praise the Lord: "He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of great waters." (Ps. xviii. 17.)

V. 4. His piteous complaints begin not with the first stroke of the chastising rod, as effeminate minds are wont to do; but the hero of the battle-field, who had slain his ten thousands, is equally a hero in endurance. Weeks and months had passed over his useless sorrow, his throat had got dried with crying, his eyes weak with looking in vain for the arm of the Lord. A change seemed to have come over the heart of Saul, but the voice of calumny rose anew, and an evil spirit seized the king. The blows of the rod became the blows of the club, among which he did not least feel that the door of access to the Lord was shut, that he had to wait in vain. He seeks comfort in God for his ineffectual waiting on God.

V. 5. By far the greater number of the courtiers and servants of Saul belonged to his own tribe—the tribe of Benjamin. (1 Sam. xxii. 7.) They shared in all probability the sentiments of Cush

* They are cisterns for the collection of rain-water, with so narrow an opening above that a stone is sufficient to shut them: the reason is to keep out the drifted sand. They gradually widen below, and if not full of water are full of mire.

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the Benjaminite, of whose envenomed speech complaint is made in Psalm vii. The king went at a later period, accompanied by three thousand young men, in pursuit of the fugitive. (1 Sam. xxiv. 3.) As was the king, so were his servants. Innocent in heart, David was perfectly at a loss to understand why the anger of the king did not subside. He sought for reconciliation after the bitterest persecution, asking from the innocence of his heart, "What have I done? what is mine iniquity?" (1 Sam. xx. 1.) His expression, "I shall restore that which I took not away," is a proverbial form of speech descriptive of all kinds of unfounded accusation. David, complaining of being innocently persecuted, was far from desiring to suffer as *guilty*. Socrates, on his wife visiting him in prison and grieving at his suffering without a cause, asked her *whether she would rather see him suffer as guilty*. So David's complaint simply purports to remind God of his eternal justice, the administration of which he has of his own accord pledged to man.

V. 6. It is one of the wiles of Satan that man, when persecuted with innocent reproaches, gets more prone to delude himself as to his real guilt. Not so David. He ignores righteousness before the Lord, though he may courageously show his face to man. He may therefore confidently expect that He who had so often called himself the judge of the widow and the orphan, will not suffer his righteous cause to perish.

V. 7. The sufferings of a servant of God are never confined to him as an individual. Whenever the Lord succours his people in general, when and wheresoever it may be, it affects every individual, and is to every one of them a seal of mercy—while on the other hand the cause of the individual is equally the cause of all the rest. The Church is one body—you cannot touch a toe without affecting the whole body. "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor. xii. 26.) Happy is that servant of the Lord who suffers not as an individual, but as a *member*, for the whole body suffers with him, strengthening his cause in the Lord.

V. 8—10. David adduces the evidence that it was not his own cause only that was at stake, for he was zealous not only for his cause, but for that of his God. The sacred earnestness to which he gave expression as a king in words like these, "A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person," (Ps. ci. 4,) dated not from his accession to the throne, but accompanied him from his father Jesse's flock to the court of Saul. He became on that account an object of derision to men like Doeg and Cush, and not only to them but to his nearest kinsmen. (Cf. Ps. xxxviii. 12, 13.) David already had to realize the words of our Saviour, that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household because of the truth." He refers not to his natural brothers, for his friends did

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not accompany him to the residence,* but he means his friends by marriage at the court of Saul, Jonathan excepted. They are called brothers. (2 Sam. i. 26; Gen xiv. 14; xxiv. 27.) The "house of God" designates not only the tabernacle, but the congregation that used to assemble there, that generation of the children of God of which he speaks Psalm lxxiii. 15. (Cf. Ps. xv. 1; xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4; lii. 10.) We have already noticed the fulness of meaning and abundance of riches which to David lay concealed in the term, "The house of God." "The children of men get drunk with the riches of thine house." (Psalm xxxvi. 9.) One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." (Psalm xxvii. 4.) But however much his soul was kindled with love for the house of his God, his zeal was that of a *servant*, while Christ's zeal was that of the *son of the house;* hence the disciples of our Saviour, on beholding his zeal for the temple, remembered that then this passage met its true fulfilment. (John ii. 17.) David feels himself strong and thoroughly armed in being able to identify his cause with that of the Lord. But on the other hand, how great are the sufferings of that man in this earth of sin and wickedness, who feels every reproach which touches *God*, as touching *himself!*

V. 11—13. They who see that the honour of God is insulted when their own is, weep away their life grieving and mourning. But does it stand to reason, that those who have no tears for their own sins should appreciate the tears shed because of the sins of others? Yes, the very persons that occasion those tears mock at them. They sit at the gates where idlers assemble, (Ruth iv. 1; Prov. xxxi. 31,) and the inns where drunkards meet, (Job xxx. 9,) gossiping and singing away the conscientious scruples which the sight of a man, who weeps over the sins of the race, might possibly have aroused.

V. 14. While *they* prate and sing, the pious bard reverts to prayer. Human resources are exhausted—he confines himself to God alone. He must wait, but he hopes earlier or later to catch the moment when Divine goodness, though at present hid behind the cloud, shall send forth her glorious beams. He might in prayer have consoled himself with the crown promised to the believing sufferer, but though all his sufferings were endured in the cause of the Lord, in hoping for an answer he neither takes his stand on his sufferings nor on his works, but prays, "*In the multitude of thy mercy hear me.*"

V. 15, 16. His feet threaten to sink in the mire; the tumult

* It may also be inferred that they remained at Bethlehem, from the fact that when David on his flight got to the cave Adullam, we are told that his brothers came to see him. That cave was only a few miles distant from Bethlehem, not far from Thekoa. (1 Sam. xxii. 1.)

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of his enemies comes rolling like a mighty flood of waters. He deprecates the extremity of woe. Those cisterns have a narrow mouth, which if shut, bring painful and bitter death to the unhappy prisoner who is confined in them. So David prays that the one vista of the bright heavens above might not be stopped, that the pit might not shut its mouth over him.

V. 17—19. His prayer gains in intensity: his consolation flows from the unchangeable attributes of God, which are now as they were then, the fount of comfort to the pious, of which, however, we Christians only have received the true pledge. His hope is not based on his works, nor his sufferings, but on the mercy and lovingkindness of the Lord. Let him in his great trouble only behold the face of the Lord, and he is happy to know that *He* is nigh, and he is comforted.

V. 20. His anxiety only makes him say that his God does not see him. David knows that when the eye of man is averted from the humbled, and has no delight in him, then the eye of God fixedly rests upon him, and that there is on earth no spectacle more glorious to the Lord, than that which exhibits the perseverance of his saints under the cross. When the pious cannot see the Divine countenance radiant with mercy, their distress and anxiety makes them say that *God* has veiled his countenance and retired from earth into heaven. "Thou knowest my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee." Thus he exclaims. It is one of our most potent consolations that the earthly struggles of the pious are as it were performed on a stage, while the Eternal with his angels and the host of perfected saints are the spectators.

V. 21, 22. As elsewhere in the case of David, (cf. ad. Ps. vi.) so here spiritual conflict had affected his physical frame. The reproach which had broken his heart, also crushed his body. The ungodly cannot sympathize with the spiritual sufferings of the servants of God, because they are not familiar with them, but they are able to perceive and sympathize with bodily sufferings. The humiliated man hoped to find in them this kind of sympathy. But they give him gall for meat and bitter for drink. This is a figurative, not a literal expression. (Cf. Jer. ix. 14; xxiii. 15.) The experience of David as an imperfect saint, in an imperfect and figurative sense, became literally fulfilled in Christ, the perfectly holy one. (Matt. xxvii. 34.)

V. 23—27. Patient endurance in the heat of tribulation, and the forgiveness of our neighbour's offences, are *our* duties, while it is the office of *God* to distribute justice among the obdurate. The deeply humiliated man had abandoned all hope that the hard hearts of his adversaries would ever relent. He therefore invokes the Divine justice to cause the mischief which they had prepared for others to fall upon their own head. They were singing at the

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carousing table while the servant of God fasted and wept: so shall the *table* of their delight, where they were sure of peace, become their snare. They had abused their eyes to make them run through the land for the destruction of the saints of God: so their eyes shall be darkened. They had abused their strength to strike down the godly: so they shall tremble for fear, that their loins shake. (Nahum ii. 10; Isa. xxi. 3.) They had felt themselves secure in their palaces, (Ps. xlix. 12:) so their *houses* shall become desolate. For the hand of *God* had smitten the pious; but they delighted in it, and boasted as their doings what God had brought about.

V. 28, 29. It is the curse of sin to beget new sin: so the poisonous root in them shall display all its fibres, but the justification of God remain to the honest in heart, unto whom it is promised. Sin is remitted only where it is acknowledged, but where it is *denied* it will be punished. Those who carry death in their heart, so that the mouldering odour issues from their mouths, shall find no place in the book of the living!

V. 30—34. When God shall arise, who has said that he "resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble;" and "for the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise," (Ps. xii. 6,) and verify his word this time: then will the sufferer bring his offerings—not such as others bring—not the gifts which are offered with hands, but those which are offered with the heart, a song of praise and thanksgiving out of a full heart. Then shall not only his own cause be triumphant, but there shall be a universal triumph of the congregation of the children of God. Men are most prone to favour the mighty and the rich. God adopts a divine method; and he whose throne is in the heaven of heavens chiefly delights in those who are poor and of a contrite spirit, and tremble at his word. (Isa. lxvi. 2; Ps. cxlvii. 10, 11.) The term "prisoner" should be interpreted of every kind of affliction. (Lam. iii. 34; cf. Ps. lxviii. 7, and ad. Ps. xiv. 7; lxxix. 11.)

V. 35—37. When Israel was in the furnace of tribulation, they applied to their hearts this prayer of David. They were then poor and imprisoned; they prayed in the words of David, and like David were heard. Hence this addition to the prayer of David which was probably sung by a *chorus*.

PSALM LXX.

This is a portion of Psalm xl. (v. 14—18,) which probably used to be prayed by itself in the time of the Babylonish captivity.

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PSALM LXXI.

A DIGNITARY (v. 21) rich in eventful experience (v. 7) supplicates in old age, (v. 9. 17,) and after a season in which the whole nation had experienced many and great troubles, (v. 20,) the Lord to protect him by his mighty hand, since impious enemies aim even at his life, (v. 10, 11.) The mild and amiable language of an old man, who is resigned to and happy in God, pervades this psalm. After a short sigh (v. 1—3) he recollects as motives for confidence, his many wonderful deliverances and experiences from his earliest childhood, (v. 4—8,) his helpless old age, (v. 9,) and the wicked arrogance of his enemies, (v. 10, 11.) He will not abandon hope, but trust continually, hoping to be preserved to be enabled to publish to his children and grandchildren the strength and power of the Lord, (v. 14—19.) He has shared the humiliation of his nation, but trusts to share their elevation, and to see the return of former days of greatness, (v. 20, 21.) He abandons himself to the confident expectation to still glorify his Lord in songs and with the psaltery, (v. 22—24.)

1 IN thee, O LORD, do I put my trust:
Let me never be put to confusion.
2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape:
Incline thine ear unto me, and save me.
3 Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort:
Thou hast promised to save me;
For thou *art* my rock and my fortress.
4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,
Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.
5 For thou *art* my hope, O LORD GOD:
Thou art my trust from my youth.
6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb:
Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels:*
My praise *shall be* continually of thee.
7 I am as a wonder unto many;
For thou *art* my strong refuge.
8 Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise,
And with thy honour all the day.
9 Cast me not off in the time of old age;
Forsake me not when my strength faileth.

* Or, "Thou art my benefactor from my mother's womb."

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10 For mine enemies speak against me;
And they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,
11 Saying, "God hath forsaken him:
Persecute and take him; for *there is* none to deliver *him.*"
12 O God, be not far from me:
O my God, make haste for my help.
13 Let them be confounded *and* consumed
That are adversaries to my soul;
Let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonour
That seek my hurt.
14 But I will hope continually,
And will yet praise thee more and more.
15 My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness
And thy salvation all the day;
For I know not the numbers *thereof.*
16 I will go in the strength of the LORD GOD;*
I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only.
17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth:
And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.
18 Now also when I am old and greyheaded,
O God, forsake me not;
Until I have showed thy strength unto *this* generation,
And thy power to every one *that* is to come.
19 Thy righteousness also, O God, *is* very high,
Who hast done great things: O God, who *is* like unto thee!
20 *Thou,* which hast showed us great and sore troubles,
Shalt quicken us again,
And shalt bring us up again from the depths of the earth.
21 Thou shalt increase my greatness,
And comfort me on every side.
22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery,
Even thy faithfulness, O my God:
Unto thee will I sing with the harp,
O thou Holy One of Israel.
23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee;
And my soul which thou hast redeemed.
24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long:
For they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

* Or, "I come before the Lord with the praise of his power."

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V. 1—3. The old man, cast down by the visitations of Divine providence, appears before his God. He is supported by the promise of the Lord, that those who trust in him shall never be put to confusion, and his faith, confirmed by the experience of his whole life, that the Lord is indeed a rock and a fortress.

V. 4—8. He has a solid foundation—the experience of a long life. He has clung to faith and hope throughout the entire period of his existence—even from his youth, where lightsomeness presents so powerful an obstacle to their exertion. His experience is of an extraordinary kind—he is as a wonder unto many, and the excellence of his experience arises from having sought in the Lord his only refuge. He did not like most men recognise the hand of God only when in an extraordinary manner it became manifest in life; but his eye of faith regards the ordinary works of God as miracles. The translation from his mother's womb to the light of day is to him an object of praise. (Ps. xxii. 10, 11.) And really is not the preservation of the embryo in its narrow confines a miracle? is it not a pledge simultaneous with man's growing into being, of our after experience in life, that we have a God "who bringeth us out of death to light?" (Psalm lxviii. 21.) Is not the reason of our finding so little to praise to be sought in our having no eyes for his daily miracles? The Psalmist *has* eyes for the daily miracles of the Lord—and therefore his mouth is daily full of the praise of the Lord.

V. 9—13. If God did help in the time of our youth and manhood, when our own strength aided us to overcome many difficulties, how much more will *his* strength deliver us when ours is gone. Especially when the wicked challenge his mighty arm. For God will never suffer it to be said that he forsakes those who all their life long have not forsaken him.

V. 14, 15. But whatever may happen, the Psalmist will not cease to persevere even in the night of tribulation. Though unable to proclaim the salvation of God as the result of actual present experience, he does it by *faith* and hope. He is sure that the continuous flow of his most ardent praise is always greatly surpassed by his salvation.

V. 16. Weak in himself, his faith assures him of strength through the strength of the Lord God. And as those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength and mount up with wings as eagles, so the *old man* is seen walking in that strength which comes from above. The praise which youth bestows on earthly goods, because still *unacquainted* with their insufficiency, lies far behind him. The praise which manhood in the proud consciousness of its own strength bestows on the strength of man, he has seen turned to shame. Of all things which men are wont to praise in old age, one only is left as praiseworthy—*the righteousness and*

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*goodness of the Lord.** This is the proper employment of old age —the supports of earth must diminish in our estimate in the measure as we recede from them.

V. 17—19. He regards it as the chief concern of his life to proclaim the wondrous works of God: if spared any longer on earth, that shall be the end of his life. Are there better preachers of the works of God to be found than hoary parents in the circle of their children, or grandparents in that of their grandchildren?

V. 20, 21. The public sufferings of the nation seem to have brought low into the dust *his* greatness; but he hopes to share the elevation of his people.

V. 22—24. *We* think it a lovely sight to see an old man spend his days in singing the praise of God with trembling lips to the notes of the harp. And there is no more beauteous sight to God— and the notes of that harp sound up to the highest heavens. Faith did inspire the pious old man with his confidence; his future songs of praise become therefore the foundation of his hope.

PSALM LXXII.

An easy and lively flowing song, which contains a prayer for the righteous and merciful protection of a king and the blessing of his people, for his acknowledgment by the whole world and the eternal duration of his kingdom. As the psalm refers to the future, it must either have been composed at an earthly monarch's accession to the throne or apply to a future king; but the promises here made are by far too lofty and great to be even in the flight of poetic imagination applicable to a king. A poet speaks, indeed, in Psalm lxxxix. 37, 38, of David in terms similar to v. 5 and 17; but while there eternal duration and government are promised to the *posterity* of David, eternal dominion and the homage of the heathen are promised here to the *king himself*. Again, in Psalm lxxxiv. 26, a kingdom is promised to David from the Mediterranean Sea to Euphrates, which he really obtained. The king in this psalm, however, shall reign from the river to the ends of the earth, (Zech. ix. 10; Micah v. 3,) language perfectly analogous to the expressions of the prophets respecting Messiah. There is, indeed, a great probability that Zechariah the prophet had the present prediction before him. As, moreover, the title ascribes this psalm to Solomon,

* The word "righteousness" always equals in the Psalms "integrity," and is therefore equivalent to "faithfulness and lenity."—Cf. ad. Psalm v. 9.

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it cannot apply to any other king than Him whom Solomon acknowledges as his superior, and whom David called "his Lord." (Ps. cx. 1.)*

The theme of the first half of this beautiful psalm is taken up and completed in the second. V. 1—4 celebrate the righteousness, v. 5—11 the fulness of blessing and glory of the king; v. 12—14 repeat the praise of the righteousness and mercy, and v. 15—17 of the blessing and glory of his government.

A PSALM of Solomon.

1 Give the king thy judgments, O God,
And thy righteousness unto the king's son.
2 That he may judge the people with righteousness,
And thy poor with judgment.
3 Let the mountains bring peace to the people,
And the little hills, by righteousness.
4 He shall judge the poor of the people,
He shall save the children of the needy,
And shall break in pieces the oppressor.
5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure,
Throughout all generations.
6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:
As showers *that* water the earth.
7 In his days shall the righteous flourish;
And abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.
8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the river unto the ends of the earth.
9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him;
And his enemies shall lick the dust.
10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents:
The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him:
All nations shall serve him.
12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth;
The poor also, and *him* that hath no helper.
13 He shall spare the poor and needy,
And shall save the souls of the needy.
14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence:
And precious shall their blood be in his sight.

* The lxx. renders the ל of the title, "Concerning Solomon," but they do it in violation of the renderings of all the other titles. This psalm is referred to Messiah by Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, Umbreit, Köster.

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15 And they shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba:
Prayer also shall be made for him continually;
And daily shall he be praised.
16 There shall be an abundance of corn in the earth up to the top of the mountains:
The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon:
And *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.
17 His name shall endure for ever:
His name shall be continued as long as the sun:
And *men* shall be blessed in him:
All nations shall call him blessed.
18 Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only doeth wondrous things.
19 And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever:
And let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory. Amen, and Amen.
20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

V. 1—4. The glory of the Almighty, whom Israel praises, because "he executeth judgment and righteousness in Jacob," (Psalm xcix. 4,) refers to him who is his visible representative on earth. So Isaiah says of Messiah, that he shall order and establish his kingdom with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever, (Isa. ix. 7;) and that "with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." (Isa. xi. 4.) As the Eternal sways the sceptre of righteousness for the best of his oppressed followers on earth, so he has instituted his Anointed One to conquer the earth for the meek. (Matt. v. 5.) The people referred to in v. 2—11 are none other than the true people and Israel of God, (see ad. Psalm xiv. 4; lxxiii. 1;) the peace and salvation of that people shall spring up in so rich a profusion, that they shall reach from the valleys to the high mountains, and be seen from every quarter.

V. 5—8. The Psalmist now addresses in lively measures the king himself, announcing to him the endless duration of his government. Christian knowledge and indeed the sublime anticipations of the prophets (Isa. lx. 19, 20) regard the present form of the earth and the skies with their starry hosts as transient, but the Psalmist expresses the common view, which apprehends the glorious stars as of greater duration than the earth. (Psalm lxxxix. 37.) As mild rain upon the mown grass, so shall the earth prosper and flourish, when he shall open the flood-gates of his blessing—even that earth which shall be inhabited by none but the generation of the righteous. The extension of Israel had been promised to

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reach from Euphrates to the Mediterranean, (Deut. xi. 24; cf. Gen. xv. 18,) nor did David's kingdom extend any further, (Psalm lxxxix. 26;) but these borders expand before the prophet's vision, "He shall have dominion from sea to sea," *i. e.* to the Indian main. (Amos viii. 12.) Verse 11 prohibits the narrowing of these frontiers.

V. 9—11. The most *uncivilized*, the *most distant*, and *most opulent* nations shall pay their homage to Him; the barbarous inhabitants of the desert, the remote Isles of the west, and the kings of rich Arabia (Sheba) and Æthiopia (Seba) shall lick the dust of his feet, *i. e.* they shall lie prostrate in the attitude of adoring homage, and give an effective expression of their homage by the multitude of their gifts, as Isaiah has declared it in sublime measures. (Isa. lx. 6—9; Psalm lxviii. 30; xcvi. 7, 8; lxxvi. 12.)

V. 12—14. The whole world shall acknowledge that he is a king of perfect righteousness, a Saviour of the poor and needy. (Cf. Ps. cxvi. 15, and ad. verse 14.)

V. 15—17. The plenitude of the blessings he shall bring, lies condensed in the term, "They shall *live*." They shall offer the choicest gifts. It will be their everlasting and blessed occupation to praise and pray for him before God. (Rev. v. 8—10.) It has been asked how the poor and needy could offer gifts of the gold of Arabia to their king. On the one hand verse 10 cannot be understood literally, but refers to the spiritual gifts, in the same way as Isa. lx. 17 cannot be literally explained: on the other hand be it observed that the poor and needy shall be redeemed and enriched by this king: they belong to the righteous, who according to verse 7, shall flourish, and for whom according to verse 16, the earth shall unfold her riches. The fulness of temporal and spiritual blessings in the completed kingdom of God is described in figures similar to those which we have noticed in Psalm lxvii. 7. So is the fulness of the land, for it shall shake there as on the heights of Lebanon, and the fulness of the cities, in which numerous inhabitants shall stream like a river. (Mich. ii. 12.) Then shall the ancient blessing of Abraham (Gen. xxii. 18; xxvi. 4) be fulfilled, for in *this* descendant of Abraham shall all the families of the earth be blessed, and him shall they praise.

V. 18—20 contain a praise, which announces the end of the second book of the Psalms.

PSALM LXXIII.

A PSALM of comfort at the prosperity of the wicked, like Psalms xxxvii. xxxix. xlix.

The chain of thoughts which are named at the beginning had

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been long before the Psalmist's mind: the sufferings of the godly, and the undisturbed prosperity of the wicked who regard neither heaven nor earth, the temptation to which the godly are exposed, when God seems to be unfaithful to his promises, (v. 2—14.) Appearances spoke as it were with conquering force, but if the Psalmist had believed in them, he would virtually have denied that which he esteemed far more precious and certain than any appearances—he would have become a traitor to the generation of the children of his God, (v. 15.) He went into the sanctuary of his soul to seek the solution of the enigma with Him who knows how to solve any and every enigma of life, (v. 17.) In the light of this revelation he sees how foolish and ignorant he had been in having given scope to those doubts. "The shadow image of the prosperity of the wicked is gone when they awake. But thou guidest me here below by thy right hand, and will ultimately receive me to glory." Thus spake God in the sanctuary of his soul. The Psalmist as if awaking from his deep meditation, (Psalm cxxxix. 18,) and saving himself from the multitude of his thoughts, (Psalm xciv. 10,) sets the result of all his struggles at the head of his song. "Yet God is good to Israel." The storm being overpast, the calm which ensued in his soul was the brighter. He praises God with a strength and intensity hardly equalled in any monument of antiquity, as that good which far excels all others, (v. 25—28.)*

A PSALM of Asaph.

1 YET GOD IS GOOD TO ISRAEL,
EVEN TO SUCH AS ARE OF A CLEAN HEART.
2 But as for me my feet were almost gone;
My steps had well nigh slipped.
3 For I was envious at the foolish,
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
4 For they have no pains till their death:
But their strength *is* firm.
5 They *are* not in trouble *as other* men;
Neither are they plagued like *other* men;

* How beautiful is this psalm. A brief maxim, the result of many meditations, begins and ends the poem. He reverts in a quick and unobserved manner to his position, describes his error, and having set this picture in the fullest light, changes the song. He is ushered into the council of destinies, and regards himself as a brute in his former judgments. New vows to God, as yet proportioned to the former figure of doubt, rise to the warmest sentiment, till another maxim concludes the song, A beautiful psalm of instruction as to matter and arrangement.—*Herder.*

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6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain:
Violence covereth them *as* a garment.
7 Their eyes stand out with fatness:
The thoughts of their hearts transgress.
8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression.
They speak loftily.
9 They set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue walketh through the earth.
10 Therefore his people return hither:
And waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.
11 And they say, "How doth God know?
And is their knowledge in the Most High?
12 Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world:
They increase *in* riches.
13 Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain,
And washed my hands in innocency.
14 For all the day long have I been plagued,
And chastened every morning."
15 If I had said, I will speak like they,
Behold, I should have been a traitor to the generation of thy children.
16 When I thought to know this,
It *was* too painful for me;
17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God;
And took note of their end.
18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places;
Thou castedst them down into destruction.
19 How they are *brought* into desolation, as in a moment!
They are utterly consumed with terrors.
20 As a dream when *one* awaketh;
So, O Lord, when they awake, thou shalt despise their image.*
21 Thus my heart was grieved,
And I was pricked in my reins.
22 So foolish *was* I and ignorant:
I was *as* a beast before thee.
23 Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee.
Thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.
24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
And afterward receive me *to* glory.

* Or, "When thou wakest them."

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25 Whom have I heaven *but thee?*
And *there* is none upon earth *that* I desire but thee.
26 My flesh and my heart faileth:
But God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.
27 For, lo, they that are from thee shall perish:
Thou shalt destroy all them that go a whoring from thee.
28 But *it is* good for me to draw near to God:
I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
That I may declare all thy works.

V. 1. We all confess to the indubitable article of faith, that God governs the world. How different would our perseverance in affliction be were we indubitably to believe it. But affliction is generally accompanied by dejection, dejection issues in doubt, doubt gives rise to mental conflict; the struggle gets intense, but the multitude of the heavy and gloomy thoughts of the heart must ultimately yield the bright and sublime result to which Asaph gives expression, "Yet God is good unto Israel!" Is it possible that a mind so intimately united with God as that which speaks in verses 25, 26. 28, should ever murmur against him? Let every man become a liar, that God be true. (Rom. iii. 4.) It should be noticed that the Old Testament saints distinguished, like Paul, (Rom. ix. 6; Gal. vi. 16; cf. ad. Psalm cxxv. 5; cxxviii. 6; also ad. Ps. xxiv. 6; xxv. 22,) between Israel after the flesh and Israel after the spirit. The Israel of whom the Psalmist speaks are such as are of a clean heart.

V. 2—5. On measuring the prosperity of men by their outward successes, we shall find that just those who disregard justice and the laws of God are, if not always, yet very often, in prosperous circumstances, and the haughty show which they make of their wealth is the touch-stone on which the faith of the godly is to be tried. The distributive justice of God was in days of old as it is now, visible in the history of a nation as a whole, but not always in the life of individuals. The outward prosperity of the ungodly ought never to be a stumbling-block to those who, in their communion with God, have tasted that there is nothing on earth or in heaven which can exceed the possession of himself. Not even in those rare instances, when having stifled the scruples of conscience as well as the appetite of their hearts for something better, the ungodly deem themselves happy in their own opinion. They are acquainted only with what they *have*, not with what they are *deprived of*. But he who knows what *they* are deprived of cannot well envy them. In the measure as we are envious, we lack communion with God in our hearts. For where that exists in power, who would exchange it for the prosperity of a thousand worlds?

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V. 6—9. Pride and violence are sure to arise when the children of the world have become secure in their prosperity, for they only know themselves as the masters of their happiness. Pride becomes their ornament, (Prov. i. 9,) and oppression, like a garment, accompanies them everywhere. Their faces express voluptuousness; the images of their heart "overpass the deeds of the wicked." (Jer. v. 27, 28.) Their words are the words of reproach, their works the works of oppression: there is nothing in heaven and nothing on earth which they do not consider as *under* their control. Is it likely that they who trace not their own strength back to God should be afraid of his strength, and that they who are not afraid of the strength of God should fear right and law on earth?

V. 10—14. Temptations of that kind may, however, though transiently only, cause the elect of God to hesitate. Though doubt strike no roots in the *heart*, who can prohibit the *thoughts* which pass through the unguarded mind? We hear even a man like Jeremiah raise a doubting complaint to Heaven in the hour of temptation. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me reason the case with thee: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit; thou art near in their mouth and far from their reins. But thou, O Lord, knowest me: thou hast seen me and tried my heart toward thee." (Jer. xii. 1—3.) It was the experience of Asaph that the people of God had joined the band of the wicked that they might drink in abundance. To *drink water* denotes plentiful enjoyment. (Prov. v. 15.) The heart of man undeniably expects at the hands of God a difference between the righteous and the unrighteous; else it cannot believe in God. If now the pious leave out of sight that the march of Divine justice on earth is often very gentle—indeed so gentle that human ears can hardly hear it: that here below is the time of long-suffering, which through goodness leadeth to repentance, but that on that account the day of wrath shall in no way fail to come, (Rom. ii. 4, 5:) if the pious forget these things they are liable to gloomy doubts as to the existence of a God, who beholds and delights in those who have pure hands and hearts: such doubts are generally followed by murmuring, judging, and chiding with the Governor of the world.

V. 15—17. The tempter approached Asaph, and tried to infuse such thoughts into his mind, but he knew the meaning of the sweet word of being a *child of God*. To become a traitor to the generation of his children is to him the most terrible of thoughts. The enjoyments and experiences of those who belong to that generation are realities which bid defiance to all appearance, and keep the heart fixed on God, even when the thoughts begin to roam and the mouth to wander. He found it a hard conflict: he had thought

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and wrestled. This caused him to descend to *that deep* where all the riddles of life are solved: at the deepest foundation of his heart was the sanctuary of his communion with God. He forced entrance into that, and was commanded to look at the *end*.

V. 18—20. However firmly established in their own eyes, the soil beneath them is slippery. When we open our eyes at day-break the dream of the night is vanished: so on their awaking shall their shadow-happiness vanish. When our *faith* shall become *vision*, then their *dreams* shall be like *foam*.

V. 21, 22. How foolish do grief and envy at so unsubstantial a prosperity appear in the light of this reply!

V. 23, 24. Concerning himself he has on the contrary heard an oracular declaration, which is an ample equivalent for every and anything. The path of the godly may be slippery and rough, but an invisible hand will hold their right hand, guide them with a wise counsel, and ultimately, after shame and wretchedness, lead them in honour and glory to that place, where they shall be received by Him who was their highest good on earth.

V. 25, 26. Ought not man, after such a revelation, to collect all the love which hitherto was attached to the creature, and give it to him who is able to fill the void of hearts throughout eternity? After such a solution of his enigmas, the flames of Asaph's love to God begin to burn so brightly in his heart, that they absorb every other. He has felt anew, perhaps, more than ever, the riches of his possession in his God—he declares it in jubilant language, which reminds one of the Apostle's triumphant exclamation. (Rom. viii. 33—38.) The blessing of the nocturnal hours of doubt in the case of God's chosen people becomes manifest in this, that when the multitude of their thoughts have, like a huge heap of ashes, covered the flame of their love to God and almost extinguished it, the moment will arrive when faith shall blow away the heap of ashes, and the flame ascend with irresistible force to heaven. A man, so intimately united with God, as Asaph here expresses it, cannot but by his union get refreshed in body and mind; yet while he with the clearest consciousness connects the possession of every bodily and spiritual good with his highest possession, he feels constrained to furnish the testimony, that whatever may be called goods is as nothing to him *beside* God.

V. 27, 28. They who know no other life than that of this earth shall perish and go into eternal death, when the shadow which they regarded as the substance shall have ceased. But they who had *that* life and *that* joy which are imperishable in death, shall continue, and the declaration of his works shall be their occupation for ever and ever.

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PSALM LXXIV.

A PSALM, composed after the devastation of the kingdom of Judah (B. C. 588) by the Chaldeans, and the spoiling and burning of the Temple. Many interpreters, both ancient and modern, have thought that the psalm refers to the profanation and spoiling of the Temple which Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, brought on Israel (B. C. 167,) and which is mentioned in 1 Macc. i. 30, and Josephus' Archæol. xii. v. 4. This opinion appears to receive a striking confirmation from v. 9, which declares that *there are no more prophets in the land*,* and speaks of the erection of *signs* in the *Temple*†, while v. 8 seems to refers to the *synagogues*, which were probably built after the time of the exile.‡ But the Book of Psalms was long before that time incorporated into the Jewish canon—it can, on that account, contain no psalm of so late a date. In 1 Macc. vii. 17, moreover, Psalm lxxix. 3 is quoted as Holy Writ. Add to this, that the king of Syria did profane and spoil the Temple, but not destroy and burn it,§ and in spite of the detailed account, which the book of Maccabees and Josephus give of the ravages of the Syrians, there is no mention made of the burning of the synagogues.

As an introduction to those psalms which refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the abduction into exile, we subjoin a brief view of the prophetic history relative to that solemn judgment of God.

The Lord, to whom the future is as the present, had early caused to be published as warnings what he had determined in his council concerning Jerusalem. Who can forbear being deeply

* The complaint, that there were no prophets, was made in the days of the Maccabees, for prophecy was silent from Malachi to John the Baptist, *i. e.* for four hundred years, (*vide* 1 Macc. ix. 27.)

† Antiochus Epiphanes ordered a small altar for idol worship to be built *upon* the altar of the sanctuary, (1 Macc. i. 54.) Modern interpreters have almost of one accord thought that this passage refers to a statue of Jupiter Olympius, which had been erected upon the altar, but Hengstenberg with reference to v. 59, has rendered the incorrectness of that view indubitable. (See Contrib. to the Introd. to the Old Testament. Vol. i. p. 186.)

‡ They are mentioned in Josephus de bello Jud. vii. 3.

§ 2 Macc. i. 8; viii. 33; 1 Macc. iv. 38. 48. *Maurer* quotes the last verse as an evidence of the burning of the Temple, but that verse must be interpreted by those passages which speak of the burning of the *gates* only. It is conceivable that after the profanation of the Temple, and the establishment of idol-altars in the Temple, many alterations took place in the interior, though that does not prove the burning or destruction of the entire edifice.

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impressed with the omniscience of God, which stretches over centuries, as well by the solemnity of Divine justice, on reading that immediately after the building of the Temple the Lord appeared to Solomon, uttering upwards of four hundred years before the destruction the threat, "But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, *then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them: and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight: and Israel shall be a proverb and a byeword among all people: and at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and to this house?*" (1 Kings ix. 6, 7.) Prophecy gets more explicit and definite with the approach of the threatened catastrophe. Micah, who lived in the reign of Hezekiah, predicted more than one hundred years before the event, the country to which Israel should be carried. "Be in pain and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shall go even to *Babylon*." (Micah iv. 10.) Isaiah foretold, in the reign of the same king not long afterwards, the same event, when the king of Babylon, moved by the mighty judgments of God upon Sennacherib, had sent ambassadors to Hezekiah, (cf. ad. Ps. xlviii. 10—12,) and Hezekiah, vainly ambitious, showed them his treasures. "Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: Behold the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord." (Isaiah xxxix. v. 6.) Nor were the words of the old prophet unremembered one hundred years later, when Jeremiah, persecuted by the nation on account of his upbraidings, referred before all the people of Judah to the words of Micah (Jer. xxvi. 18,) the prophet. As the days of visitation approached, the prophecies, too, became more bright and overwhelming. The nation had to experience several preludes of the final catastrophe. Jerusalem appears to have been taken by Nebuchadnezzar as early as the fourth year of Jehoiakim, again in the eleventh,* when youthful Jeconiah, his mother, and wives, along with ten thousand eight hundred and thirty-two of the flower of Israel, were carried by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon. (Cf. Introd. ad. Psalm xliv.)

In Palestine, Jeremiah, the man of grief and the witness of God

* Cf. Dan. i. 1. Hengstenberg's Contribut. to the Introd. to the Old Testament. Vol. i. p. 152. *Keil* on Chronicles, pp. 24. 439; and Movers's Researches on the Books of Chronicles, p. 333.

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to an apostate race, was left as the sole holy watchman of the house and people of God in the midst of a rebellious generation of false prophets, idolatrous priests, sanguinary and deluded princes. He had received the divine command to threaten and reprove, or to admonish and edify, those who were not past edifying, in the gloomy days which were about to set in. He almost uninterruptedly, and with the most definite details, predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity. The Lord called him when a youth to his office. He had a presentiment of the impending evil days; and he obeyed the Divine call not without strong resistance from within. Immediately after his call, which took place in the thirteenth year of Josiah, about fifty years before the catastrophe, *at a time when profound peace and prosperity rested upon the nation*, he had a vision of that ultimate visitation. "And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north. Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah." (Jer. i. 13—15.) A brief delay of peace was granted up to the death of Josiah (†609,) the much mourned-for king. From that period the nation, under Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, rushed into ever-growing destruction, and the Lord proclaimed the irrevocability of his judgment, saying, "*Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.*" (Jer. xv. 1.) Jehoiakim, madly deluded, cut the book of the warning prediction, which Jeremiah had written, into pieces, and burnt it in the fire. (Jer. xxxvi. 22, 23.) He destroyed also with the sword, Uriah, the prophet, who had predicted the impending calamity, and cast his corpse into the graves of the common people. (Jer. xxvi. 20—23.) Jeremiah, though surrounded by prison, scourging, cruelty, and peril of death, was, according to the promise of the Lord, (Jer. i. 19,) miraculously preserved alive. The king's vain hope was, in spite of the prophet's admonition to the contrary, in Egypt; supported by that rotten tree he actually ventured to revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he was tributary. The king of the Chaldeans now advanced with his hosts, took Jerusalem, carried Jeconiah, eighteen years old, who had ascended the throne of his father Jehoiakim, along with ten thousand of the noblest amongst the people, to Babylon, instituted Zedekiah, his uncle, as king, after having rendered him by heavy oaths a tributary vassal to Babylon. Eight years afterwards Zedekiah violated his oaths—again in opposition to the admonitions of the prophet—trusting in

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the hope of aid from Egypt. Lying prophets proclaimed predictions which fell in with popular likings, *e. g.* that the captivity of Jeconiah should soon terminate—they thus fanned the delusion, and furnished the most undeniable evidence that the prophecies of Jeremiah and other true prophets were not the results of human inspiration. (Cf. the remarkable 28th chapter of Jeremiah.) The armies of the angry king of the Chaldeans once more invaded Palestine, laid waste the provincial towns, and besieged Jerusalem. Despite the bonds and chains which fell to his reward, Jeremiah prophesied, saying, "*Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it: and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes, and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him.*" (Jer. xxxii. 3—5; xxxiv. 2, 3.) The strong city resisted for eighteen months. At one period a ray of hope was seen. The hosts of Egypt advanced to help, and the Chaldeans retired from Jerusalem to meet them. Zedekiah sent a message to the prophet: "Pray now unto the Lord our God for us." This was the last refuge of their hope. The word of the prophet once more declared, "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me: behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. And the Chaldeans shall come again and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire." (Jer. xxxvii. 7, 8.) The Chaldeans returned, and it is terrible to say—while the foe stood at the gates, while schism, famine, and pestilence raged within the city, the people instead of turning to the living God, as their only refuge, began to worship idols. Ezekiel, far away in Mesopotamia, on the banks of Chaboras, had a vision of these horrors. In a vision he felt himself seized by a lock of his hair, "and," saith he, "the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh towards the north." What did the seer's eye behold? He saw first at the northern entrance of the inner court a *Canaanite* idol, then at the eastern entrance in deeply concealed apartments, the walls covered with hieroglyphics, with images of beasts and creeping things, and seventy elders offering incense to the *Egyptian* idols: then at the northern entrance there sat women weeping for the *Syrian* Thammus, *i. e.* Adonis: and in the inner court five and twenty *priests*, with their backs towards the temple of the Lord, worshipped the sun towards the east after the manner of the *Persians*. (Ezek. viii.) Should such abominations be suffered with impunity?

In the colony established at the banks of Chaboras, Ezekiel felt

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for the calamities of his native country, and prophesied her future judgments. Like a man convulsed by pain, he raises his bitter complaint for the sword of death which is drawn against Jerusalem. (Ezek. xxi. 19, *etc.*) The hosts of the king of Babylon have gone forth, and he beholds in a vision the indecision of the king whether he is to march against the Ammonites or against Jerusalem, sees him consulting heathen soothsayers, and how the lots decide against Jerusalem. "*The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose it at the head of the way to the city. Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem, the defenced. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he shook his arrows* (קִלְקֵל to shake or wave: these arrows had a name inscribed upon them,) *he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint battering rams, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering rams against the gates, to cast a mount, and to build a fort.*" (Ezek. xxi. 19, *etc.*) Ezekiel visibly describes in a still more striking manner by his own person, the events which, at a great distance in time and space, should on the day of visitation transpire at Jerusalem. Before the eyes of his companions in exile he was ordered to depart, after the symbolic manner of the prophets, with his baggage on his shoulders, to dig through the wall, and to remove it in the twilight, as a sign unto the house of Israel. And the word of the Lord commanded him to say at the same time, "I am your sign; like as I have done, so it shall be done unto them (*you;*) they shall remove and go into captivity. And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes. (Indicative of mourning: cf. 2 Sam. xv. 30.) My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; *yet he shall not see it*, though he shall die there." (Ezek. xii. 11, *etc.*)

Josephus narrates (Archæol. x. 7. 2,) that the prediction of Ezekiel was sent by letters to the king, and that the contradiction which he thought to perceive between it and that of Jeremiah only confirmed his obduracy. Now Jeremiah had not said that the fugitive king should see the *land of Babylon*, but that he should see *Nebuchadnezzar*. The predictions of the two prophets, however, were fulfilled with so astonishing an exactness, which can hardly fail to terrify hardened sinners at all times and in every

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place, and to confirm the wavering in their faith in God, the governer of the world.

Nebuchadnezzar did either not appear in person at Jerusalem, or felt disinclined to share the fatigues of a siege of eighteen months. Like Pharaoh-Necho in the days of Josiah, (2 Kings xxiii. 33,) Nebuchadnezzar had fixed his camp at Riblah, on the frontier of Syria and Palestine. On the ninth day of the fourth month of the eleventh year of king Zedekiah, the Chaldean generals entered the city, and Zedekiah, accompanied by a few faithful followers, escaped at night out of the city, along the king's garden, through the gate on both walls. The Chaldeans before the city saw, pursued, and overtook him on the road to Jericho: he was carried to Riblah, and loaded with reproaches, for his faithlessness had to submit to judgment. His children were butchered before his eyes, *his own eyes were put out*, and bound in chains he was led to Babylon. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of Ezekiel, that he should be brought to Babylon, *yet he should not see it:* Ezekiel having made mention of the unbelieving carelessness of the people, who said, "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth;" when the Lord God said, "*I am the Lord; I will speak, and the word which I speak shall come to pass: it shall be no more prolonged.*" (Ezek. xii. 22. 25; cf. Jer. xxxix.) Be not deceived, God is not mocked. The generals went, according to Josephus, immediately after the conquest of the city, to the temple, for it was the most important building, and its treasures the bait of conquerors. Before determining what to do with the city and the temple, they sent to consult the king. Not until a month afterwards did they break down the ornaments of the temple, (Jer. lii. 17,) and burn the king's palace, the temple, and the chief buildings. The more respectable class of the people, that were still left, were carried away captive; only vinedressers and husbandmen (Jer. lii. 16) were left behind, upon whom whom was imposed the payment of a moderate tax. The lenient Babylonish viceroy dwelt at Mizpah: under him and round Jeremiah a new congregation was formed. Nebuchadnezzar, who had doubtlessly been informed of Jeremiah's efforts to stay the folly of the people, had offered him glorious distinction at Babylon, but Jeremiah preferred to share the fate of the small remnant of his nation. The viceroy was slain, however, after hardly two months had elapsed, and the terrified people fled from the vengeance of the Chaldeans to Egypt, again contrary to the express word of the Lord. (Jer. xlii.) Jeremiah, the most faithful of pastors, would not even then forsake the faithless band: he accompanied them, though proclaiming to them in the most definite language that they should not stay there, but that Nebuchadnezzar would pursue them thither. (Jer. xliii. 10, *etc.*) He came upon them, and the last remnant of the rejected people of God, who were driven into every direction, after having

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rewarded the faithfulness of the prophet of the Lord by *slaying him with wicked hands*, were also carried to Babylon.

Psalm lxxiv. was composed after the destruction had occurred, though the hostile army had not yet gone (v. 23,) when the desolation had become so great that bands of robbers had established themselves in the city, (v. 20.) One of the few who were left behind must be regarded as the author of this psalm.

In language of deep emotion rises the call for help, (v. 1, 2.) The bard is silent of temporal injury; he only weeps for the ruin of the glorious temple, the burning of the synagogues, and the absence of a prophet to proclaim the end of the woe, (v. 3—11.) For his comfort he causes the ancient records of Divine omnipotence which prevailed over human oppression, as well as the monuments of Divine omnipotence in nature, to pass before his mind's eye, (v. 12—17.) Edified thereby, he finds courage to pray that God, the protector of the needy, would not deliver into the power of the foe the timid turtledove, (v. 18—21.) Reanimated by hope, he even calls upon the arm of the eternal for a renewed attack, (v. 22, 23.)

1 AN Instruction of Asaph.
O God, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever?
Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?
2 Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of old;
The tribe of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed;
This Mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.
3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations;
Even all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.
4 Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations;
They set up their ensigns *for* signs.
5 They appear like *those* who have lifted up
Axes upon the thick trees.
6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at once
With axes and hammers,
7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary,
They have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground.
8 They said in their hearts, "Let us destroy them together."
They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

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9 We see not our signs:
There is no more any prophet:
Neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.
10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?
Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?
11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?
Pluck *it* out of thy bosom and finish.
12 For God *is* my King of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.*
13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength:
Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.
14 Thou brakest the heads of the crocodiles in pieces,
And gavest them *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.
15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood:
Thou driedst up mighty rivers.
16 The day *is* thine, the night also *is* thine:
Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.†
17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth:
Thou hast made summer and winter.
18 Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached the LORD,
And *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.
19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude *of the wicked:*
Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.
20 Have respect unto the covenant:
For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.
21 O let not the oppressed be turned away in shame:
Let the poor and needy praise thy name.
22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause:
Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.
23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies:
The tumult of those that rise up against thee ascendeth continually.

V. 1. "For he is our God: and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." So said the people in Psalm xcv. 7. Would a shepherd pain his flock to such a degree? It

* Exod. viii. 18, states that God, by the control over nature, in Egypt, gave a sign to Pharaoh, that He was Lord in Egypt.

† Or, "Thou hast appointed the course of the lights and of the sun."

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was a time when the whole nation was called upon to reflect upon the sentiment in 2 Macc. vi. 14—16: "For not as with other nations, whom the Lord patiently forbeareth to punish till they be come to the fulness of their sins, so dealeth he with us, lest that, being come to the height of sin, he should take vengeance of us; and though he punish with adversity, yet doth he never forsake his people. But let this that we have spoken be for a warning unto us." Shall God be silent for ever? If so, would not then the words of Psalm l. 21 be verified? "*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*"

V. 2. Israel is indeed the Lord's inheritance from of old; it grieves him, therefore, that he is compelled to use such severe measures with him. The Lord himself asks, "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. (Jer. xxxi. 20.) From words like these they could infer that the Lord "doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." (Lam. iii. 33.)

V. 3—7. Robbed of his possessions, his city and country laid waste, his friends slain or carried into captivity, the Psalmist's greatest grief is on account of the profanation of the *sanctuary* by wicked hands. Instead of psalms and songs of praise the triumphant roarings of heathen warriors are heard. As in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, so probably at this time the heathen, as appears from v. 9, set up in the temple their signs, holy things, altars, and rites. The axe fell upon the holy symbols, as if they were common wood. It may easily be imagined that the enemy had removed every precious thing from the temple, before they set fire to it. Jeremiah, indeed, reports as much. The two celebrated pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece in the outer court, (1 Kings vii. 15;) the gilt folding-doors, the colossal golden vine, the symbol of Israel, (Psalm lxxx. 9;) the splendid carpenters' work of cedar, with carved figures of cherubim, palm-trees, and open flowers, all overlaid with gold, (1 Kings vii. 15—35,) were there. How many precious, how many *holy* remembrances of the present and the past! And all this fell beneath the strokes of the axe and the hammer, as if a man were felling wood.

V. 8. They contemplate total destruction. The synagogues throughout the country were burned. Now it appears that synagogues or houses of worship did not spring up before the captivity of Israel, when they were no longer able to resort to the temple for purposes of worship. From this circumstance many have thought that this psalm ought to be referred to the days of the Maccabees. But, as was observed above, there is no record that Antiochus

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Epiphanes did burn the synagogues in the country. Others apply the passage to idolatrous high places and sanctuaries, of which, though destroyed by the godly Josiah, some might have remained; but it does not stand to reason that the pious bard should mourn *their* being consumed by fire, nor would he have called them the synagogues of *God*. Others again explain it of the settlements of the schools of the prophets; but they had most likely ceased by this time, else he would not have complained that there were no more prophets. Others again refer it to the noted places, where God had revealed himself to his people. But these were not known to the heathen, nor were they distinguished by any external marks. There is, however, nothing to prevent the supposition that as early as then, there were scattered throughout the country synagogues for purposes of prayer, if not for the reading of the Scriptures.*

V. 9. The holy signs mean the entire sacred ritual, emblems, sacred relics in the temple, circumcision, sacrifices; hence the prophets are mentioned in connection with them. It was a Divine judgment, according to the prediction of Ezekiel: "Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour (judgment) shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision from the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients." (Ezekiel vii. 26.) Although in those hard times Jeremiah continued a holy watchman among the people, who had not only predicted the desolation but also the end of the calamity, (Jer. xxv. 11, 12,) yet in spite of all this, a man who saw before him seventy long years of woe, might, overwhelmed by his grief, utter complaint like this, because there was no star of hope for the *immediate* future. If the author of this psalm was one of the fugitives in Moab or Edom, (Jer. xl. 11,) and composed it at the juncture when Jeremiah had, with the last remnant of Israel, fled to Egypt—the expression that there was no prophet left would be accounted for. But since verses 10, 18, 23, seem to imply the presence of the Chaldeans in the country, yea, in the city itself, the psalm must belong to the time when Jeremiah, bound in chains, had already been sent to Ramah to be carried with the remnant to Babylon. (Jer. xl. 1.) The intense grief of the Psalmist might, however, have expressed itself in language, which is not to be taken quite literally. Jeremiah himself says, "Her gates are sunk into the ground: he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles; the law is no more: *her prophets also find no vision from the Lord.*" (Lam. ii. 9.)

* The passage 2 Kings iv. 23, seems to imply that pious Israelites used to assemble with the prophets on Sabbaths and new moons. Perhaps "the assembly of the elders," in Psalm cvii. 32, (which was, however, composed after the exile,) may, as Köster thinks, mean "assemblies for prayer."

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V. 10, 11. Having enumerated the causes of his grief, the lacerated mind of the Psalmist once more reverts to the complaint in the beginning. Then he asked, Why?—now he prays that their unprecedented humiliation may not be of long duration.

V. 12—15. The comfort which he derives from the past history of Israel brings relief. He calls the nation of the Egyptians a monster, and the crocodile of the water, because that rapacious beast is peculiar to the river Nile, *see* Ezek. xxix. 3; Isa. li. 9. The pursuing hosts of Pharaoh were drowned in the waters and their bodies cast ashore to become the food of jackals, the inhabitants of the wilderness. The Omnipotence of God provided for his people in the most opposite manner, now breaking streams out of the cloven rock, (Exod. xvii. 6; Numb. xx. 8,) and now drying up mighty rivers, which used not to dry up in summer. (Josh. iii. 14, etc.)

V. 16, 17. The same God has inscribed his Omnipotence on the book of nature. Not accident, which is *lawless*, but the living God has framed the eternal laws of the courses of the sun and the moon. (Psalm cxlviii. 6.) His law reigns on the earth as it does in the skies: 'tis he who made the change of seasons and set the borders of countries and nations. (Acts xvii. 26.)

V. 18, 19. This is the foundation on which the Psalmist bases his prayer to God, to display in the profound ignominy of his people the eternal rights of that Omnipotence which governs history and enacts the laws of nature. He calls his nation the turtledove of God—at this time not on account of their purity and innocence, but because of their helplessness and timidity, for he immediately prays, "Forget not the congregation of *thy poor*."

V. 20, 21. He cannot appeal to any righteousness of his own. "Look upon the Covenant." This is the eternal asylum of the saints of God even in the greatest peril. And though they have broken it, shall the unbelief of man make the faithfulness of God without effect? (Rom. iii. 3.) The country must have been desolate to a fearful extent if in their great calamity, when all the ties of law and order had ceased, every secret place of the land had become a den of murderers.

V. 22, 23. The savage tumult of the foe rages as yet without intermission in the capital and the borders of the land. Though the nation herself is the originator of all those evils, yet *the name of the God of Israel* is for their sakes reproached! (Isaiah lii. 5; xlviii. 11.)

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PSALM LXXV.

A SONG of praise, expressive of the firm confidence that deliverance is nigh. Verse 7 shows that the deliverance has respect to an enemy who comes from the north, for it says that deliverance is to proceed neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, *i. e.* the desert of Arabia, (cf. Psalm cxxvi. 4:) for a similar reason the east, the west, and the south only are mentioned, (Psalm lx. 10.) Since Psalm lxxvi. speaks definitely of the deliverance of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, and since Israel did not experience any other great deliverance from a northern foe than this—it may be concluded that the Psalmist raised this song of praise at the time when it was observed at Jerusalem that the pestilence had commenced its ravages in the camp of the foe.

The sudden and fearful manifestation of the hand of God from heaven against the proud, causes the Psalmist to recognise in that judgment a prelude of the final judgment of God on evildoers. He begins with a description of the praise of the wondrous works of Jehovah, which shall then be sung, (v. 2,) adduces a prophetic sentence like those which Isaiah had in those days repeatedly addressed to the haughty king who would not own that he was only an instrument in the hands of the Omnipotent, v. 3—6, (cf. ad. Psalms xlvi. xlviii.) He next ascribes the sole honour of deliverance to God, (v. 7, 8,) proclaims the Divine judgment on evildoers, (v. 9,) and thinks with exultant joy of his future songs of triumph, naming as it were as their theme the promises of God, (v. 10, 11.)

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm *or* Song of Asaph, to the tune "Destroy not."
2 Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks,
Unto thee do we give thanks:
For *that* thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.
3 "When I have taken a set time,
I will judge uprightly.
4 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved:
I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.
5 I say unto the fools, deal not foolishly:
And to the wicked, lift not up the horn:
6 Lift not up your horn on high:
Speak *not with* a stiff neck."
7 For promotion *cometh* neither from the east,
Nor from the west, nor from the desert.

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8 But God *is* the judge:
He putteth down one, and setteth up another.
9 For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup,
And the wine foameth, it is full of mixture;
And he poureth out of the same:
But the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, *and* drink *them*.
10 But I will declare for ever;
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.
11 "ALL THE HORNS OF THE WICKED ALSO WILL I CUT OFF;
BUT THE HORNS OF THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL BE EXALTED."

V. 2. The name of God is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." The Lord himself referred to his name, Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6. A new revelation of its truth is at hand, and the Psalmist hears beforehand the praises of his delivered nation.

V. 3—6. The fulfilment is at hand. Isaiah prophecies in similar terms, (Isaiah x. 12—15,) "I shall take a set time," saith the word of the Lord. Israel did no doubt experience at that time the grief, of which Asaph says, "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (Psalm lxxiii. 8.) Many a time may they have asked, "O Lord, how long?" The word of God reminds them that there is a suitable time for the manifestation of Divine justice; though the earth and the heavens should in the meantime shake, and human pusillanimity imagine the worst—when the set time shall have arrived, even a whole world of tumult and confusion must again turn quiet. So should we, when all around us is in confusion, and the firmest strongholds give way, still retain the belief, *that God is only waiting for his set time.* Divine visitations will least fail to appear when the pride of wretched mortals ventures to measure itself with the Lord in heaven, for God can never suffer mortals to deprive him of his honour. (Isaiah xlii. 8.)

V. 7, 8. In virtue of the promised revelation the Psalmist disdains to look for elevation from any other quarter than from him who has promised to hold judgment in his time. He looks to every direction from which the people might have expected deliverance to come, *e. g.* from the kings of Egypt or Ethiopia, as in fact those princes had really gone forth to the aid of Israel. (See Introd. to Psalm xlvi.) God alone shall be the judge and the refuge: and thus it came to pass. Not human weapon, but the blow of the hand of God destroyed the proud Sennacherib: "*For the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host: but strength cometh from heaven.*" (1 Macc. iii. 19.)

V. 9, 10. As the head of a family passes the cup at table, so the

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Lord, whose throne is in the heavens, hands to mortals, according to their deserts, the cup of consolation or of folly. As myrrh (Mark xv. 23) is put into wine to impart to it a stupifying virtue, so God presents to evil doers an intoxicating cup, which they must empty to the poisonous dregs. When the judgment began, the servants of Sennacherib had to drink of *that* cup, and "fell into their sleep." (Ps. lxxvi. 6.)

V. 11. The Psalmist cannot grow weary with praising. His imperishable theme is the truth that the righteous shall *finally* prevail.

PSALM LXXVI.

A SONG of praise for the deliverance of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib. (Cf. ad. Ps. xlvi. xlviii.) This psalm was probably composed by the same Asaphite, soon *after* the deliverance of Zion, who composed Psalm lxxv. *before* that event. It strikingly depicts the eventful history of that time. As in Psalm xlviii. so here the bard commences with praising the city of God, where he had long since revealed his glory, and now also brought to an end the strife of men, (v. 2—4.) He next describes how the mighty ones, drunk with the intoxicating cup of God, have, with all their apparatus of war, sunk powerless in the sleep of death, and been obliged to leave their spoil to the servants of Jehovah, (v. 5—7.) As it were, still stupified by the voice of the judgment, he now speaks of the solemnity of the Divine judgments, (v. 8—10.) God weaves himself a wreath of honour from the vain rebellion of mortals. The Psalmist, therefore, finally calls upon the heathen, as in Psalm xlvi. to pay their homage to the Lord, (v. 11—13.)

1 TO the chief Musician on the harp, A Psalm *or* Song Asaph.
2 In Judah *is* God known:
His name *is* great in Israel.
3 In Salem also is his tabernacle,
And his dwelling-place in Zion.
4 There brake he the arrows of the bow,
The shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah.
5 Thou *art* glorious *and* excellent
From the mountains of prey.*

* This translation is sanctioned on comparing Cant. iv. 8; others render, "More glorious than the mountains full of prey," *i. e.* the mountains of the enemy, who came from the mountains of Mesopotamia; cf. Nah. iii. 18.

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6 The stouthearted are spoiled,
They are sunk into their sleep:
And none of the men of might have found their hands.
7 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.
8 Thou, *even* thou, *art* to be feared:
And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?
9 Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven;
The earth feared, and was still,
10 When God arose to judgment,
To save all the meek of the earth. Selah.
11 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee:
The remainder of wrath shall praise thee.*
12 Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God:
Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him
that is to be feared.
13 He shall cut off the spirit (or, "the courage") of princes:
He is terrible to the kings of the earth.

V. 2. The preceding psalm had praised the approaching new revelation of the Divine name; now after it has become true and been sealed anew that "God is yet good in Israel," the Psalmist can with increased confidence say that the name of the Lord is known and glorious in Israel. We Christians read and repeat it with sublime joy, knowing that every title to grace, every privilege, has passed from the Israel after the flesh to that Israel of whom the apostle speaks in Gal. iii. 16. It may now be said of this Israel after the spirit that, "In Judah is God known, his name is glorious in Israel." The Church of true believers is now the theatre of the glory of God. The Church in which, says the apostle, is manifested the manifold wisdom of God, is a glorious revelation even to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, (Ephes. iii. 10.) Knowing ourselves the members of the same body, conjointly with the people of the ancient covenant, with how increased a sense of sympathy do we peruse God's dealings with them! The tribe of Judah designates the entire nation as in Psalm cxiv. 2.

V. 3, 4. Psalm xlviii. 2, praises after the same manner, that the Lord has set up his tabernacle in Salem (the ancient name of Jerusalem, (Gen. xiv. 18;) and the author of Psalm xlvi. lauds the Lord in verse 10, for having terminated those wars before Jerusalem, which Sennacherib had for many years carried on in a large portion of the then known world. But the report of the fact

* Or, "With them thou girdest thyself," *i. e.* they shall surround thee with praises.

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that the proud waves were stayed here, that just before the heights of Salem, "the hook was put into his nose, and the bridle into his lips," (Isaiah xxxvii. 29,) coupled with the name of the God of Israel, could hardly fail to spread throughout all lands, (Psalm xlviii. 11.)

V. 5—7. The Lord had foretold "that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot." (Isaiah xiv. 25.) They came to the mountains of Jerusalem for prey, but they were obliged to leave prey behind them on those very mountains. The expression of the Psalmist with reference to sleep, into which the men of might helplessly fell, is the more significant, since a tendency to sleep accompanies the pestilence. A profound stupor had inperceptibly translated the sleepers into eternal sleep. "When they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." (2 Kings xix. 35.) The poet paints the scene as if we were accompanying him into the camp, a short time ago so full of life, but now covered with the silence of death. Nahum refers in similar terms to the ultimate destiny of Assyria: "Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; thy valiant ones shall dwell in the dust; thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them." (Nahum iii. 18.)

V. 8—10. "Thou, even thou art to be feared," we exclaim with the Psalmist. The repetition of "thou" seems to say, that he alone is to be feared who is able to disperse with a single breath the united strength of the world. The judgment came from *heaven*. The visitation was too great to refer it to chance or to any human power. The words of the prophet concerning the wicked are generally true: "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace to the wicked." (Isaiah lvii. 20, 21.) But even the wicked must be silent, when the bared arm of the Lord visibly pierces the clouds.

V. 11—13. Believers may with unshaken confidence look at the rage of man. For it is certain that all mankind, the godly as well as the wicked, must serve the Lord—the one of their own accord, the other against their will. The eternal and self-consisting Creator turns the fury of man into a wreath of honour. So the Scriptures say God raised (*i. e.* set him up in history) Pharaoh simply for the purpose that he and all his raging should become instrumental to God's name becoming declared throughout all the earth. (Rom. ix. 17.) The horn of Sennacherib was broken, his fury put an end to, but the *whole* power of the foe was not yet destroyed. A remnant had yet to be conquered. But that remnant also must serve the Lord. The Psalmist considers the solemn judgments of the God of Israel to have been an irresistible sermon to all the princes of the earth, and calls upon them to pay their homage to this God, who is able to break all human pride. He

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probably says this in allusion to the fact, that at that time surrounding nations, most likely the Egyptians and Ethiopians, who were endangered by Sennacherib, brought gifts for Hezekiah and the Temple. (2 Chron. xxxii. 23.) Psalm lxxxvii. gives expression to still brighter Messianic hopes, most probably in connection with the same event.

PSALM LXXVII.

A MELANCHOLIC song of complaint, deriving consolation from the wonderful works of God in the past. We can hardly conceive that the Psalmist intended to conclude the poem with the remembrance of the exodus from Egypt, though the preparative verses 14—17 might possibly dispense with a conclusion, as it is indeed wanting to Psalm lxxviii.; but the probability is far greater that the Psalmist was prevented from pursuing the narrative of the marvellous works of God and bringing thus the poem to a close.

Troubles and struggles in prayer have for a long time continued day and night with the Psalmist, (v. 2—4.) He dwells on the joyous times of the past, and meditates on the thoughts of God, (v. 5—7.) He inquires whether more gladsome days were to arise, (v. 8—12.) He derives strength and comfort from the thought that God did prove himself a covenant God, (v. 13, 14.) When the Lord delivered his people, he brought them through the great waters by ways unknown to men, and led them as his flock, (v. 15—21.)

1 TO the chief Musician of the Jeduthunites, A Psalm of Asaph.
2 I cried unto God with my voice,
Even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.
3 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord:
My hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not:
My soul refused to be comforted.
4 I remembered God, and was troubled:
I meditated, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.
5 Thou holdest mine eyes waking:
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
6 I have considered the days of old,
The years of ancient times.

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7 I call to remembrance my song in the night:
I commune with mine own heart:
And my spirit maketh diligent search.
8 "Will the Lord cast off for ever?
And will he be favourable no more?
9 Is his mercy clean gone for ever?
Doth *his* promise fail for evermore?
10 Hath God forgotten to be gracious?
Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Selah.
11 And I say, "THIS MY AFFLICTION
IS A CHANGE OF THE RIGHT HAND OF THE MOST HIGH."
12 I will remember the works of the LORD:
Surely I will remember thy wonders of old.
13 I will meditate also of all thy work,
And talk of thy doings.
14 Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary:
Who *is so* great a God as *our* God?
15 Thou *art* the God that doest wonders:
Thou hast declared thy strength among the nations:
16 Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph.* Selah.
17 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee:
They were afraid:
The depths also were troubled.
18 The clouds poured out water:
The skies sent out a sound:
Thine arrows also went abroad
19 The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven (or, "in the whirlwind:")
Thy lightnings lightened the world:
The earth trembled and shook:
20 Thy way *is* in the sea,
And thy path in the great waters,
And thy footsteps are not known.
21 Thou leddest thy people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

V. 2. Asaph informs us that, unlike the many, he had not poured out the trouble of his heart indiscriminately, but that he had set a term to his cries, even that term, to which the complaint of mortals should alone be directed, he cried unto *God*.

V. 3. He did not in a superficial manner ease his heart by pray-

* Cf. ad. Psalm lxxx. 2.

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ing now and then, as many people declare to have prayed, when, after having turned their eyes to a thousand helpers, they have now and then looked up to heaven. But Asaph had for nights stretched forth his hands, though his soul refused to be comforted by that means of grace. They are real men of prayer with whom, when answers fail to be forthcoming, the thirst for prayer gets not weakened, but inflamed with greater ardour. Beginners get weary and look out for other helpers. Asaph's faith did not waver; he knew that they who perseveringly and believingly knock at the door, will sooner or later get admittance.

V. 4. There are moments in the life of every believer when God and his ways become unintelligible to them. They get lost in profound meditation, and nothing is left them but a desponding sigh. But we know, from Paul the Apostle, that the Holy Spirit intercedes for believers with God, when they utter such sighs. (Rom. viii. 26.)

V. 5. Disquieted in heart he cannot find sleep. He has cried again and again, but his mouth grew silent for a time, and he gave himself to deep thought. Whenever silence and thought like this occur after *prayers long and loud*, though the mouth be quiet the heart continues in secret prayer.

V. 6, 7. He selects the theme which believers in trouble ought always to choose: the days when the goodness of God was seen and tasted. He makes mention of songs of praise, which he had sung at night. This shows him to have been one of those godly men who are peculiarly fond, in the still loneliness of night, to hold communion with God. Such remembrances appease the tempest of the soul, so that we gather courage and comfort ourselves with the words, "Thou art his, he will never leave thee." But Satan may withal turn these sweet remembrances into temptations; *e. g.* when our soul inquires, "Why is it not always so?" or when troublesome thoughts arise, like those expressed in the succeeding verses.

V. 8—11. We have seen that these despairing thoughts arose after continued and silent suffering. It is to be noticed that the doubt which is here expressed is not the doubt of unbelief, but of hesitancy and pusillanimity: for he is unable thoroughly to believe the suggestions of pusillanimity. Will God, who had said that his name is "Merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," (Exod. xxxiv. 6,) become untrue to his name? Will God, to whose attributes it belongs to be *good* and *faithful* to his *promises*, make an exception in *my* case? Impossible.

V. 12—14. He turns therefore his attention to the manifestations of the power and mercy of God in ancient times. *His* doings are different from the doings of the gods whom the heathen worship. He does not mean to affirm the existence of other gods, but to shame the folly of the world, which will not be satisfied with this one God, whose wondrous power is so great. (Psalm xcvi. 5.)

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V. 15—20. He contemplates the memorable miracle of the exode from Egypt, which is to all believers in Israel a figure, how God brings his people out of the gloom of tribulation. Then God powerfully manifested that the elements must obey at his bidding, if he but moves his hand towards the deliverance of his people. (Cf. Notes ad. Psalm lxxviii. 13.) As a slave at the approach of his master, so the billows tremble at the approach of God. A north-east wind had divided the waters. The Psalmist describes poetically the power of the Divine operations as the power of a tempest. (Cf. ad. Psalm xviii. 10, *etc.*) But Moses seems to speak of a storm which fought against Pharaoh. (Exodus xiv. 24.) The Lord of Hosts has a way of his own, on which none can follow him. When the waters returned his footsteps were gone. Well may the Christian poet say, "Every way there is a way to him, and means he has the many." As a shepherd leads his helpless flock, so the Lord led his people faithfully by the hand of his chosen servants. (Micah vi. 4; Numbers xxxiii. 1.)

PSALM LXXVIII.

A PSALM of instruction, being a dehortation to the people from the disobedience and inconstancy of their ancestors. (Cf. Psalm cvi.)

The psalm contemplates, however, another end, namely, to justify the removal of the sanctuary from Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim, to Zion in the tribe of Judah. The psalm concludes with that justification as with its leading thought, (v. 67—72.) It is expressed in verses 9—12, that the dehortation is specifically applicable to the children of Ephraim, who had taken no warning from the example of their forefathers. Circumstances must have induced the choice of this theme: the inducement was furnished by the jealousy of the tribe of Ephraim, which had occasioned as early as the days of David, variance, schism, and even rebellion. (2 Sam. xix. 40; 2 Sam. xx.; 1 Chron. xxi. 6.)* It should be remembered that Benjamin belonged to Ephraim, the reason being that Rachel was the mother of both Benjamin and Joseph; these three sons of Rachel used to follow immediately behind the ark, when it was removed. (Cf. ad. Psalm lxxx. 2.) This relation of Benjamin to Ephraim is perfectly clear from 2 Sam. xix. 20, since Shimei, who affirms himself to belong to the tribe of Joseph, was a Benjaminite.

* Joab's reluctance to take the census in Benjamin, probably arose from the opposition of that tribe.

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(2 Sam. xix. 16, 17; xvi. 5.) This furnishes a clue to the existing variance. Since Saul belonged to the tribe of Benjamin and had greatly preferred the children of that tribe, (1 Sam. xxii. 7,) Ephraim had lost much of its importance by David's accession to the throne. Hence David was for the space of seven years acknowledged by Judah only, until Abner secured for him the acknowledgment of the other tribes. (2 Sam. iii.) The spark of discord, however, continued to glow, until it kindled into a flame at the above-mentioned occasion. The insurrection of Sebna, who was a Benjaminite, towards the close of the reign of David, furnishes the evidence of secretly-continued opposition. Hence one of David's singers might feel himself called upon to seek to justify the rejection of Ephraim on account of its guilt and the call of Judah. Asaph shows that while the sanctuary continued at Shiloh in Ephraim, Israel had to endure shame, and that even the ark fell into the *hands of the foe*, (v. 61,) until the Lord awoke, as it were, from his sleep, and gave to Israel new victories, under Samuel and David, transplanting at the same time the sanctuary to Jerusalem, from the tribe of Ephraim into that of Judah, (v. 65—68.) So Jeremiah (Jer. vii. 14, 15) addresses the kingdom of Judah, "Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place, which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim." Had this psalm been composed in later times, as is the opinion of many commentators, on what grounds should its author have confined himself to the description of Ephraim's sins *before David*, and omitted to reproach them with their falling away from the Divinely chosen race of kings? Why should he have satisfied himself with speaking of the idolatry in the time of the Judges, and be silent about their ignominious idolatry in the days of Jeroboam? The psalm can therefore not well be referred to a later period than that of David. It furnishes the remarkable evidence that the Pentateuch must then have been well known, since the Psalmist not only follows the thread of its history, but evidently dwells on specific passages of the Book of Numbers, (v. 21. 28—31.)

The Psalmist having assigned as the reason of his descending to antiquity, his desire that the children should be admonished by the works of God to their fathers, as well as by the disobedience of these, (v. 1—8;) and having accused Ephraim of unteachableness; enumerates from verses 13—55 the instances of the obduracy and faithlessness of the nation, as well as of the goodness and majesty of God. He accuses (v. 56—64) the disobedient children, who refused to take warning from the example of their fathers: that accusation applies peculiarly to the tribe of Ephraim, because under the reign of that tribe the sanctuary was with them, and

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Israel had to endure great shame at the hands of the Philistines. The sanctuary being now established on Zion, he beholds in a prophetic vision its eternal duration, for what else is the Christian Church than that spiritual Zion, which issued forth from the temporal Zion? (Gal. iv. 26.)

AN Instruction of Asaph.

1 Give ear, O my people, *to* my law:
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
2 I will open my mouth in a parable:
I will utter dark sayings of old:
3 Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
4 We will not hide *them* from their children,
Showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
And his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.
5 For he established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which he commanded our fathers,
That they should make them known to their children:
6 That the generation to come might know *them*,
Even the children *which* should be born;
Who should arise and declare *them* to THEIR children:
7 That they might set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep his commandments:
8 And might not be as their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation;
A generation *that* set not their heart aright,
And whose spirit was not steadfast with God.
9 The children of Ephraim, *being* armed *and* carrying bows,
Turned back in the day of battle.
10 They kept not the covenant of God,
And refused to walk in his law;
11 And forgat his works,
And his wonders that he had showed them.
12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers,
In the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.
13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through;
And he made the waters to stand as an heap.

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14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire.
15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths.
16 He brought streams also out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like rivers.
17 And they sinned yet more against him
By provoking the Most High in the wilderness.
18 And they tempted God in their heart
By asking meat for their lust.
19 Yea, they spake against God;
They said, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?
20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed;
Can he give bread also?
Can he provide flesh for his people?"
21 Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was wroth:
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel:
22 Because they believed not in God,
And trusted not in his salvation:
23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above,
And opened the doors of heaven,
24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat,
And had given them of the corn of heaven.
25 Man did eat the bread of the mighty:
He sent them meat to the full.
26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven:
And by his power he brought in the south wind.
27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust,
And feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:
28 And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp,
Round about their habitations.
29 So they did eat and were well filled:
For he gave them their own desire.
30 They were not estranged from their lust.
But while their meat was yet in their mouths,
31 The wrath of God came upon them,
And slew the fattest of them,
And smote down the young *men* of Israel.
32 For all this they sinned still,
And believed not for his wondrous works.

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33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity,
And their years in trouble.
34 When he slew them, then they sought him:
And they returned and inquired early after God.
35 And they remembered that God *was* their rock,
And the high God their redeemer.
36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth,
And they lied unto him with their tongues.
37 For their heart was not right with him,
Neither were they steadfast in his covenant.
38 But, he *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity,
And destroyed *them* not:
Yea, many a time turned he his anger away,
And did not stir up all his wrath.
39 For he remembered that they *were but* flesh;
A wind that passeth away and cometh not again.
40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness,
And grieve him in the desert?
41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God,
And limited the Holy One of Israel.
42 They remembered not his hand,
Nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.
43 How he had wrought his signs in Egypt,
And his wonders in the field of Zoan:
44 And had turned their rivers into blood;
And their floods, that they could not drink.
45 He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them:
And frogs, which destroyed them.
46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar,
And their labour unto the locust.
47 He destroyed their vines with hail,
And their sycamore trees with frost.
48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail,
And their flocks to flashes of lightning.
49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger,
Wrath, and indignation, and trouble,
By sending evil angels *among them.*
50 He made a way to his anger;
He spared not their soul from death,
But gave their life over to the pestilence;
51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt;
The chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:

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52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep,
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
53 And he led them on safely, so that they feared not:
But the sea covered their enemies.
54 And he brought them to the border of his holiness,
Even to this mountain (or, "mountainous country")
which his right hand had purchased.
55 He cast out the heathen also before them,
And divided them an inheritance by line,
And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.
56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God,
And kept not his testimonies:
57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers:
They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.
58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places,
And moved him to jealousy with their graven images.
59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth,
And greatly abhorred Israel:
60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,
The tent *which* he placed among men;
61 And delivered his strength into captivity,
And his glory into the enemy's hand.
62 He gave his people over also unto the sword;
And was wroth with his inheritance.
63 The fire consumed their young men;
And their maidens were not given to marriage.
64 And their priests fell by the sword;
And their widows made no lamentation.
65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep,
And like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.
66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder part:
He put them to a perpetual reproach.
67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph,
And chose not the tribe of Ephraim:
68 But chose the tribe of Judah,
The mount Zion which he loved.
69 And he built his sanctuary like the heights of heaven,
Like the earth which he hath established for ever.
70 He chose David also his servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds:
71 From following the ewes great with young
He brought him to feed Jacob his people,
And Israel his inheritance.

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72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart;
And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

V. 1—4. The Psalmist appears before the people as an exhorter, who addresses instructive sentences to them, the historic narratives being at the same time living instructions. His object is to give instruction concerning the praise, the power, the glory, and the miracles of God.

V. 5—8. He justifies his exhortation by a reference to the Divine commandment, which enacts the transmission of all the laws and commandments of God from the mouth of the fathers to their children and grandchildren, (Deut. iv. 9; x. 6, 7; Exod. xii. 26,) with the twofold object of immortalizing among them the commandments and the works of the Lord, and of furnishing in the rebellion and inconstancy of their ancestors perpetual examples of warning. For if among the children of this world, the example and education of the parents produce a generation who go even more astray from God than their fathers, so among the children of God ought penitent parents, by the recollection of their experience and sinfulness, to warn their posterity, and thus lead them to greater holiness.

V. 9—12. Ephraim especially needed that instruction. In the day of battle they had been like bow-men who did not stand their ground. This figure, like that in verse 57, indicates their faithfulness in the cause of God. The miracles of God in Egypt are not enumerated here; their enumeration begins with verse 43. Egypt is here called the field of Zoan. Zoan was the capital of Lower Egypt, about twenty-five miles distant from the land of Goshen. In its place there remains to the present day the village of *San*. It is not mentioned as an ancient and large city in the narrative of the miracles in Egypt, though reference is made to it in Numb. xiii. 22.

V. 13. The Psalmist now meditates on the miraculous exode of the children of Israel. The Scriptures state that Divine providence employed a natural means, namely, an east wind, for the accomplishment of that miracle. North-west winds are very common to that locality. The Red Sea terminates above Suez, in a bay where there is not more than a mile's distance between the opposite shores, and even below Suez the distance does not exceed three miles; at low water several depths of that locality get quite dry. Now the Israelites were marching just in the direction of Suez, and we may conceive that at the word of Moses, a wind from the east or from the north-east dried the sea at low water just in that neighbourhood, while the flood above Suez was repressed into the bay, and below Suez into the sea. Israel, therefore, marched as it were between two walls of water, while at day-break the waters which had been repressed into the bay burst forth with

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renewed force upon the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh.* The remembrance of this marvellous event has also been preserved by Greek writers.†

V. 14—16. In ancient times and even now, men carrying poles to which are attached vessels filled with fire, precede armies and caravans, as leaders and guides.‡ God condescending to a sensuous people, became himself their guide, and gave them a sensible token of his protection. On the exode he made the waters stand like walls—in the desert he turned the rocks into water-springs, (Exod. xvii. 6,) satisfying man and beast with their copious supply. (Numb. xx. 11.)

V. 17—20. In fresh remembrance of such unusual testimonies of Divine condescension, deprived of all human aid in the waste wilderness, and depending on God alone, they dared to provoke in shameless unbelief Him on whose bounty alone they depended. (Cf. Psalm cvi.) They had been miraculously preserved by the supply of manna: the low crowd of the Egyptians, that had come out with them, began to lust after the diet to which they had been accustomed in Egypt, and Israel became seduced by them. (Numb. xi. 4.)§ After all their experience, they doubt the Divine omnipotence, (Ps. cvi. 12, 13,) as if it were to be regarded as nothing, when it refused to gratify their lusts. Unbelief is so deeply rooted in the human heart, that when God performs miracles on *earth*, unbelief doubts whether he can perform them in *heaven*, and when he does them in *heaven*, whether he can do them on *earth*? (Cf. Matt. xvi. 1.)

V. 21, 22. The fire was a real fire. The manifestations of Divine wrath are as sensible and unmistakeable as are those of his love: it is recorded in Numb. xii. how God revealed his majesty, which a rude nation had insulted. The Psalmist makes a literal reference to that event. The anger of God arose because they would not believe in him. Doubting his omnipotence is tantamount to robbing God of his honour; hence it is said of Abraham that because he was strong in faith he gave to God the honour due to him. (Rom. iv. 20.)

* Cf. Niebuhr's Description of Arabia, p. 410, with the map of the neighbourhood of Suez in Robinson's Palestine, i. p. 90, *etc.* and Von Raumer's Exode of the Israelites, 1837, p. 16, where the view is defended that the passage took place more to the south, where the sea is fifteen miles in width.

† Diod. Sic. iii. 39, Artapanus in Euseb. præp. ev. ix. 27.

‡ Rosenmüller, The Ancient and Modern East, ii. p. 4.

§ The people were by no means confined to the manna: they had cattle, and when they passed along the sea-shore, fish: they could also cultivate the soil, since during the forty years they resided for a considerable time in several places. October sowing is fit for reaping in April. But all this was not sufficient for the wants of the mass of the nation, and Numb. xi. 22, points to this fact.

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V. 23—25. The manna with which the people were fed is called here, "The bread of heaven," because descending as it were from the hand of God, it was found mixed with the dew on the land: it is called "the bread of the mighty," *i. e.* of the noble, because it was a tender and delicious food, which to this day continues a favourite dish of the Eastern nobility. Divine providence seems in this case again to have employed a natural means in a supernatural manner. For down to the present day, manna is a well-known natural produce in the South of Italy, and the East in particular. It is a sweet gum-like juice, which at sunrise in the shape of dried granules, just like the manna in the wilderness, is found in some parts on the leaves, in others on the boughs and trunks of certain trees, and is consumed in the East as a delicacy, but unknown to cause any medicinal effects. Now this produce, known as manna, has different qualities in different localities, and is found under different circumstances, and the qualities of the manna of the Israelites do not exactly correspond to any of the mannas which are known to us. The disparity consists chiefly in this, that in the days of Moses manna was found all the year round, while the modern manna obtains only for some months, the former on *the earth*, mixed with dew, the modern on trees, and but very seldom on the ground. It has been supposed on that account, that the ancient manna was produced by the exhalations of plants, which fell with the dew to the earth, as several travellers have found that the dew in the East is sweet and sticky. All things considered, it is clear that nature now yields a produce only *similar* to that which Providence then supplied in a supernatural manner. The natural appearance of manna depends upon varying circumstances, since in our times it is but rarely met with, and in the neighbourhood of Sinai frequently only after an interval of five or six years.*

V. 26—31. It is not uncommon that large numbers of quails, which come across the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, are found in Arabia and Egypt.† Since the Psalmist speaks of a south-east wind, the birds probably came from the Persian Gulf through Southern Arabia to Sinai; the statement of Moses that they fell down in heaps, is confirmed by the fact, that those awkwardly flying birds lose their strength by a passage across the sea. The judgment of God subsequent to the gratification of their insatiable lust presents a warning example. God in his anger will sometimes hear the foolish prayers of men, while the real and merciful granting of our petitions often consists in this, that Provi-

* Cf. esp. Rosenmüller's Bibl. Natur. History, i. p. 316, *etc.* and Von Raumer's Exode of the Israelites.

† Vide Josephus, Diodorus Siculus, and modern travellers in Rosenmüller's Schol. in Exodum. chap. 16.

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dence supplies something different from what we had prayed for. The Divine indignation fell also upon the strength and the youth of Israel, to show that the strong could not in reliance upon their strength presume to measure themselves with God, or to rebel against him. (Ps. cxlvii. 10, 11.)

V. 32, 33. The miracles of the wrath, no less than those of the mercy of God, however, made hardly any impression upon them, so that the justice of God performed its last judgments in that not one of those who had come out of Egypt should see the land of promise which God had sworn to them. (Numb. xiv. 28, *etc.*)

V. 34—37. The punitive judgment of God produced, however, some effect: they came to themselves for days and weeks, when the strokes of God fell too violently upon them: but where penitence produced by fear does not issue in a turning to God in faith and love, it will last no longer than till the last thunderings of Divine wrath have died away. Their penitence struck no roots. "It fell upon stony ground, and because it had no root it withered away." The Psalmist had spoken (v. 8,) of the *apostacy* and *disobedience* of the people; he now speaks of their *changeability* and the *untrustiness* of their repentance.

V. 38, 39. Who can forbear trembling on meditating upon the various scourges of God which are already now in the world, while we live in the time of longsuffering, where God desires to lead sinners through mercy to repentance? If now the cup of wrath is only poured out half, what will it be when it shall be wholly emptied? The Psalmist says that in spite of all the punishments on the people in the wilderness, God did not stir up all his wrath, but exerted his sparing mercy. In his wisdom and goodness he has made provision for the temptations and difficulties which surround helpless and needy mortals: he is not the hard master who would reap where he has not sown. (Matt. xxv. 24.)

V. 40—43. Moses, (Numb. xiv. 22,) speaks of ten great temptings of God in the wilderness, which were reprehensible in proportion to the miraculous assistance of God, and the unfailing certainty with which temporal transgression was succeeded by temporal punishment. The Psalmist now reverts to the miracles in Egypt, to which he had made allusion in v. 12.

V. 44—51. The miracles of Egypt, the ten plagues, of which the Psalmist enumerates only a few, were natural phenomena as they occur in that country in this day; but in the days of Moses they had miraculously accumulated and intensified, that Pharaoh should know, that not he in his pride, but Jehovah, was the true king of Egypt, *vide* Exod. viii. 22. The waters of the river Nile, the usually sweet drink of the Egyptians, turn at a certain season of the year reddish, like blood, (Joel iii. 4 shows that the reference is only to the colour of blood;) and though the waters *usually* continue drinkable in that condition, yet they became loathsome to the taste of the Egyptians. Musquitoes, which under ordinary circum-

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stances are a great plague in Egypt, and frogs, multiplied; locusts, which are less frequent, destroyed the crops; terrific tempests, accompanied by hail, discharged upon the cattle, the vineyards, and trees, while the pestilence slayed the firstborn.*

V. 52—55. The weak nation, accustomed to the work of slaves, would never have freed themselves by the force of arms. God himself led them forth as a shepherd does his flock. He gave them sensible evidence that he was marching before them, and yet they were afraid, as we read Exod. xiv. 11; but that fear sprung from their unfathomable unbelief. Nevertheless, the mercy of the God of Abraham brought their descendants into the land of promise, that mountainous country which was the object of Joshua's longing.†

V. 56—58. The Psalmist speaks of the *second* generation, (Cf. ad. verse 33,) but instead of being warned by the example of their fathers, they imitated it. The Psalmist refers especially to the times of the Judges, when the large mass of the nation reverted to idolatry, set up idols, and idolatrous high places, unmindful of the words of Moses. (Lev. xxvi. 30, cf. with Numb. xxxiii. 52.)

V. 59—61. Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, used already in the wilderness to march immediately behind the sanctuary, (Numb. x. 21—24; ii. 18—24; Psalm. lxxx. 3;) and when the nation came to rest, the sanctuary was placed at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim. Israel marched against their enemies under the banner of Ephraim, and the ignominy of Israel fell also on Ephraim's head; and Ephraim deserted the ark of the covenant. Terror seized upon the Philistines when they heard that the ark had marched out against them. When the news reached them they exclaimed, "Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness!" But the banner of Ephraim gave way, and the ark of the covenant fell into the hands of the Philistines. (1 Sam. iv.)

V. 62—64. Then followed the humiliation of the whole nation, as it is described in the books of Samuel. The high-priests Hophni and Phinehas died in that battle, in which thirty thousand men of Israel fell. The widow of Phinehas died of terror, and her last words were, "The glory is departed from Israel, because the ark of God is taken." (1 Sam. iv. 21, 22; Job. xxvii. 15.)

V. 65—68. Then the Lord, like a hero awaking refreshed from sleep, once more protected the nation under David, to avenge the

* Cf. Hengstenberg's Moses and Egypt, p. 98, *etc.* Rosenmüller's Ancient and Modern East, vol. i. p. 275, etc.

† Deut. iii. 25. Though Israel did not at once upon their possession of the country take Mount Zion, the reference may be to Mount Zion as the ultimate goal of the possession of the whole country. It is, however, better to regard הַר as in Psalm lxviii. 9; civ. 25, and הָרִים, as is often the case in the sense of a mountain range.

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ancient reproach of the Philistines. But he chose him a new tribe and a new dwelling-place.

V. 69—72. Sublime as in the heavens, and established like the earth upon eternal rocks, he fixed his sanctuary on that hill of which the prophets afterwards said, that "it should be exalted above the hills, and that all nations should flow unto it." (Isaiah ii. 2.) The faithful shepherd of his flocks of sheep, who tenderly cared for the suckling ewes, was called to become the shepherd of men. (So 1 Chron. xviii. 7.) He now feeds his people, as once he fed his flocks with faithfulness and his sheep with diligence. He who fears the works and the ways of the Lord is sure to acknowledge him.

PSALM LXXIX.

A PSALM of complaint, composed in the days of Israel's calamity. Though the burning and destruction of the temple are not specified as in Psalm lxxiv. the reference is nevertheless to the same event, and the composition of the poem must have taken place after the consummation of the calamity that had come upon the city, for Jerusalem is said to have become a heap of stones, (v. 1,) the whole country laid waste, (v. 7,) and neighbouring nations to have taken vengeance upon Israel, (v. 12.) The spoiling of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar had taken place in the reigns of Jehoiakim and Jeconiah, and the country had greatly suffered from the invasions of the foe. But a destruction like that which is implied in the phraseology of the present psalm had not occurred at that time, since Nebuchadnezzar only carried off the innocent Jeconiah and established in his stead his uncle Zedekiah as tributary king, that Israel might continue in vassalage. (Cf. ad. Ps. lxxiv. and xliv.)

Deeply alive to the degradation of Israel by heathen nations, the Psalmist describes the sufferings of this nation and of the holy city in particular, (v. 1—4;) he invokes the punitive judgment of God upon the heathen, and his forgiving mercy upon the sins of his nation, (v. 5—9;) he presumes to remind the Lord that the ignominy of the nation is his own, and demands a due requital. He promises to God songs of praise such as none other than his own people are able to render, (v. 10—13.)

A PSALM of Asaph.

1 O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance;
Thy holy temple have they defiled;
They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

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2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given
To be meat unto the fowls of the heaven,
The flesh of thy saints
Unto the beasts of the earth.
3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem;
And *there was* none to bury *them*.
4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.
5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever?
Shall thy zeal burn like fire?
6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee.
And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.
7 For they have devoured Jacob,
And laid waste his dwelling place.
8 O remember not against us former iniquities:
Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us:
For we are brought very low.
9 Help us, O God of our salvation,
For the glory of thy name:
And deliver us, and purge away our sins,
For thy name's sake.
10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* their God?
Let there be known among the heathen in our sight
The avenging of the blood of thy servants *which is* shed.
11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee;
According to the greatness of thy power
Preserve the children of death:
12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom
Their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.
13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture
Will give thee thanks for ever:
We will show forth thy praise to all generations.

V. 1—4. Not in common warfare but with unheard-of fury had the heathen done outrage to the holy places and their inhabitants. In their arrogance they regarded the possession of God as their own. They treated the temple as if He had ceased to exist to whose honour it had been built. Not content with the massacre of the servants of the God of Israel, they refused to them the last

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honours, in leaving their corpses unburied as meat for the birds of prey and jackals. Neighbouring nations, who had for centuries been the witnesses that Israel had the Lord for their Shepherd, raised the voice of derision, which with the people fell also upon their God.

V. 5—9. Their degradation had continued unpunished for some time already. Shall the heathen not now as in days of old be brought to the knowledge that the King of kings is ruler in Israel? The Psalmist is nevertheless aware that the heathen are only *instruments* in the hands of the Lord. He therefore prays for forgiveness of the sins of the nation, who not only on account of present iniquity, but on account of the transgression of their ancestors, had deserved the visitation of Divine anger. He prays for deliverance not on account of any merits or virtues which they possess—*but for his name's sake, for his name's sake.*

V. 10—13. When God has so intertwined his name with that of his people, and his own honour so intimately interwoven with the history of his people, as in the case of Israel, does it not follow, that the destiny of his nation affects the honour of his name? The Psalmist cannot resist the desire that the shed blood should not remain unavenged. The sighing of the prisoners (cf. ad. Ps. lxix. 34) is too piteous, and those that are left have almost fallen a prey to death. The heathen nations had used the language of derision and aided in the destruction of Jerusalem, (Ezek. xxv. 12, *etc.*; Jer. xlvii.; Obad. 10, *etc.*; Ps. cxvii.;) in reproaching Israel they had reproached the Covenant-God of Israel. The Psalmist in praying for the requital of their reproach, supplicates the *vindication of his God.* When other nations are delivered from a degrading condition they praise their fate or dumb idols. Israel only knows who is their Shepherd, to whom they owe their pasture, therefore Israel promises, if spared through their present night of tribulation, to show forth the praises of the living God.

PSALM LXXX.

A SONG of complaint, composed at a time when the worst had not yet happened to Israel, but when various heathen nations were wasting the country: we cannot determine whether its composition took place in the days of the idolatrous monarchs before Josiah, or in the period of tribulation before the reign of Zedekiah.

The author of this beautiful psalm recalls the times of old, when

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the Lord used to march before his people, on their going out to battle, (v. 2—4.) But in the present time, tears are the meat and drink of the nation, which alternately falls into the hands of neighbours or of the foe, (v. 5—8;) and yet the Lord himself had miraculously planted that vine and given it room to spread. Why should it now be undermined by wild beasts? (v. 9—15.) Shall its planter quietly look on, when it is treated like a weed? (v. 16—20.) Each strophe concludes with emphatic cries for deliverance.

1 TO the chief Musician, to the tune "the lilies of the law," A Psalm of Asaph.
2 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock;
3 Thou that dwellest *between* the cherubim, shine forth.
Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength,
And come *and* save us.
4 TURN US AGAIN, O GOD, AND CAUSE THY FACE TO SHINE;
AND WE SHALL BE SAVED.
5 O LORD God of hosts,
How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?
6 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears?
And givest them tears to drink in great measure.
7 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours:
And our enemies laugh among themselves.
8 TURN US AGAIN, O GOD OF HOSTS,
AND CAUSE THY FACE TO SHINE; AND WE SHALL BE SAVED.
9 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt:
Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.
10 Thou preparedst *room* before it,
And didst cause it to take deep root,
And it filled the land.
11 The hills were covered with the shadow of it,
And the boughs thereof *were like* the cedars of God.
12 She sent out her boughs unto the sea,
And her branches unto the river (Euphrates.)
13 Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges,
So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?
14 The boar out of the wood doth waste it;
And the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

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15 RETURN, WE BESEECH THEE, O GOD OF HOSTS:
LOOK DOWN FROM HEAVEN, AND BEHOLD, AND VISIT THIS VINE.
16 And protect that which thy right hand hath planted,
And the branch (or, "the son") *that* thou madest strong for thyself.
17 *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down:
They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.
18 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,
Upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.
19 So will not we go back from thee:
Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.
20 TURN US AGAIN, O LORD GOD OF HOSTS,
CAUSE THY FACE TO SHINE, AND WE SHALL BE SAVED.

V. 2—4. The Psalmist prays for the return of the glorious days of old, when the ark of the Lord headed the armies of his people; he therefore calls the God of Israel the *Shepherd* who *goes before* his flock. Joseph stands for Israel. (Ps. lxxvii. 16; lxxxi. 6; Obad. 18.) The three tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, the three sons of Rachel, (Numb. ii. 18—24; x. 21—24,) went immediately behind the ark. Whenever the ark arose against the enemy, (Numb. x. 35,) Moses used to exclaim, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." The Psalmist repeats this exclamation. "Cause thy face to shine upon us," was the blessing of Aaron; the Psalmist prays for the renewal of that blessing.

V. 5—8. The Psalmist solemnly addresses God as the Lord God of hosts, because he supplicates him to fight for his people. Though only certain numbers of the chosen servants of God among the people sought for aid from heaven, the Psalmist expresses himself as if the whole nation were praying. If they had really sent with one voice their prayers to heaven they would never have been rejected, for great is the strength when a whole nation of one accord, as it were like one man, importunes the Lord of heaven! No doubt they had all their share in the *tears*, though certainly not in the *prayers*. Their bread was so steeped in tears that they became their food, and so copious was their weeping that their tears became their drink. (Psalm xlii. 4.) He speaks of their neighbours and enemies as if different nations had successively invaded Palestine, as *e. g.* it was the case under Jehoiakim: shortly before him Pharaoh Necho had conquered Jerusalem and deposed *Joash;* then followed the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar; and according to 2 Kings xxiv. 2, the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites attacked the nation towards the close of Jehoiakim's reign.

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V. 9—14. The prophets have often represented the people of God by the figure of the noble vine. (Isaiah v. 1—7; xxvii. 2—6; Jer. xii. 10; ii. 21; Hos. xiv. 8; Ezek. xvii. 3—10; xix. 10. The symbol of a very large golden vine was therefore suspended above the gate of the vestibule of the temple. The noble vine was taken from Egypt, and its culture also took place in Lower Egypt, where the Israelites dwelt; but room was given it in Canaan to grow and spread. She sent her roots far into the earth, and her tendrils high up to the skies, so that she overshadowed mountains and darkened the lofty cedars.* She spread abroad, from the Mediterranean to Syria, to the river Euphrates, to those borders which Moses had promised (Exod. xxiii. 31,) and David secured to the kingdom. But the hedge which used to surround the vineyard is now broken down. (Isaiah v. 5.) Not only may all who pass by pluck off her grapes, but the wild beasts of the forest come to destroy her, and the boar undermines the soil.

V. 15—20. But even the darkest days cannot be sufficiently gloomy to prevent faith retaining the hope that a vine which God had planted with so much tender care should not lie near to his heart. God may cause a people which he has brought up to endure great afflictions, but when their chastisement is consummated, he will once more vouchsafe his aid. "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways. I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries." But afflicted Israel often forgot that God never turns his hand until it has accomplished its end with his people. Asaph and a few like-minded persons might have promised, that though chastised by the rod of God, they would not leave him if he were to remove the rod. But if only a few noble plants were left among all the people, they were obliged, in agreement with the Divine arrangements, to share the stroke which fell upon the whole nation, just as the single member must share the disease which affects the whole body. Believers should then comfort themselves in the faith that that which happens to others as a just recompense is to them a corrective, which, provided they continue in the fear of the Lord, is sure to issue in their ultimate advantage. We may then have the assurance which is repeatedly expressed in this psalm, that the gloomiest and thickest darkness may cease at any moment, that every wound may be healed, as soon as the Lord is pleased to lift up the light of his countenance.

* Rosenmüller, The East, iv. 89, speaking of the Persian vines, says, "The plant rises to the loftiest heights above the highest trees."

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PSALM LXXXI.

A PASSOVER psalm, which contains at the same time a sermon of God to his people. Verse 6 shows that the passover is meant.* Asaph, the cotemporary of David, is probably the author. It is very probable that this psalm was sung when the pious Hezekiah solemnized his large passover at Jerusalem, to which he had actually invited apostate Israel into, and there came indeed some of Ashar, Manasseh, and Zebulun, to worship at Jerusalem, in the place which the Lord had commanded them. (2 Chron. xxx. 11.) We know that then some of the Psalms of David and of Asaph were sung, (2 Chron. xxix. 30:) and the address of the Deity in this psalm is peculiarly applicable to that portion of the kingdom of Israel which had forsaken the Lord.

The Psalmist joyfully begins with the exhortation to solemnize the passover according to the Divine injunction, with pleasant music and the psaltery, (v. 2—6.) He then introduces God as speaking, as He had addressed his people from Sinai, (v. 7—11.) He then, like the prophets, filled by the Holy Ghost, complains in the name of God of the former obstinacy of Israel, and gives them promises on condition of their faithfulness, (v. 12. 17.)

1 TO the chief Musician, to the tune of Gath, *A Psalm* of Asaph.
2 Sing aloud unto God our strength:
Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.
3 Raise a psalm and strike the timbrel.
The pleasant harp with the psaltery.
4 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
In the full moon, on our solemn feast day.
5 For this *is* a statute for Israel,
And a law of the God of Jacob.
6 This he ordained in Joseph *for* a testimony,
When he went out against the land of Egypt:
Where I heard a language *that* I understood not:
7 "I removed his shoulder from the burden:
His hands were delivered from the basket.
8 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee;
I answered thee in the sacred place of thunder:
I proved thee at the waters of strife. Selah.
9 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee.
O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;

* Luther renders verse 4, "In our feast of tabernacles."

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10 There shall no strange god be in thee;
Neither shalt thou worship any strange god.
11 I *am* the LORD thy God,
Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt:
Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."
12 But my people will not hearken to my voice;
And Israel would none of me.
13 So I gave them up unto the imaginations of their hearts;
That they might walk in their own counsels.
14 O that my people would hearken unto me,
And Israel walk in my ways!
15 I should soon subdue their enemies,
And turn my hand against their adversaries.
16 The haters of the LORD should be forced to homage,
And their time should endure for ever.
17 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat;
And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

V. 2—4. The Sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual feasts of Israel were days of thanksgiving and joy. On those occasions thanksgivings are returned partly for the goodness of God in the historic guidance of Israel, partly for his annual blessings in the kingdom of nature. (Deut. xvi. 11. 14; cf. Numb. x. 10.) Hence at the occasion of the passover, the Psalmist calls for the Levites, upon whom it devolved to tune the hearts to gladness by the joyous sound of musical instruments. He calls for joyous psalms accompanied by the solemn-sounding tambourine, the clear notes of the harp and lute, bidding them to give the signal with the majestic voice of the bugle at the beginning of the month, (namely, new moon,) and in the midst of the month (namely, full moon,) for the festive gathering of all the people at the sanctuary. Sacrifice used to be accompanied by the sound of silver trumpets. (Numb. x. 10.)

V. 5, 6. Godly people regard the joy and peace of religious festivities as divine gifts. God gave Israel the privilege of rejoicing at those days. They may, yea, they shall rejoice; for the passover is the memorial of the time when God entered into covenant with his people—when after they had forgotten him, he spoke to them by words and works. The giving of the law did indeed not occur until three months after the exode from Egypt. But since the deliverance from the Egyptian thraldom was Israel's obligatory tie for the covenant of Sinai, and since God had brought them out of Egypt, for the very purpose of their becoming the people of his inheritance, the deliverance and the giving of the law

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might be conceived as intimately connected. (Exod. xix. 3—8.) The passover may be said to be the festival of the birth and life of Israel.

V. 7—11. The Lord revealed himself and made known his name to his people at the exode and the giving of the law. He was the same God whom their fathers knew, but whom, under the pressure of the yoke of Egypt, and while surrounded by an idolatrous nation, they had forgotten. (Exod. iii. 13; Amos v. 25, 26.) He spoke by a mighty act when he removed the burden which so heavily pressed upon their shoulders. *There are still existing Egyptian sculptures, which represent the Israelites with the vessels in which they carried the clay and the tiles.* He answered their cry in sending aid by the tempest which destroyed their pursuers. (Psalm lxxvii. 19.) He manifested himself to them by his miracles in the desert. (Numb. xx. 10—12.) Having done so much for his people, he was fairly entitled to exact their obedience: he had established the claims of his all-sufficiency for them, that they should not go to seek for help elsewhere. These were the demands which God put forth from Sinai, and of these the Psalmist here reminds them; and more than this, God, in his infinite compassion, actually invited the nation as it were to test his all-sufficiency. Let them open their hearts and mouths ever so wide, he would fill them; as infants and young birds are fed by their mothers, so he would satisfy them. (Psalm ciii. 5.)

V. 12, 13. But the people were not satisfied with a God like him, and the God of Israel had to complain, "*Israel will none of me.*" (Jer. ii. 5.) He gave them up and made them experience their nothingness without him. Man will return to the all-sufficient God, though by circuitous and thorny paths, if some tender parts continue in his heart; but if these are gone, then the judgment of induration will ensue.

V. 14—17. Is there a human heart that can remain unmoved on beholding the love of a superior despised by his inferior—say that of a king by a beggar? Should not the stones be moved on hearing God complain, that his people has despised him? Why does He complain? Does it impoverish *Him?* Does the spring suffer hurt, when a thirsty fool would rather perish than drink its waters? No, God, who is rich in mercy, complains of his despised love, because *He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked.* How great is the chain of testimony, furnished by the books of the history of Israel, showing that Israel was only then happy, when they hearkened to the Lord. The foolish people often complained in dark days, that their peace was far off when it was close at hand, for as the Lord here promises, He would soon have delivered them from all their enemies. But they hewed themselves *broken cisterns*, and forsook the *fountain of living waters.* (Jer. ii. 13.) The various and noble blessings which they might enjoy are here

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depicted to them by the figure of temporal goods, of fine wheat, oil, and honey, which God can cause to flow out of rocks. (Deut. xxxii. 13.) But such is man, he complains that his happiness is far away, and in departing from his God, he departs from his happiness.

PSALM LXXXII.

A PSALM of complaint against unjust judges.

The corruption of judicial administration during several epochs of the Jewish kingdom, appear from passages like Isaiah i.; Amos ii.; Mic. vii. The high demands which truly pious monarchs put upon their judges, and which in the main agree with this psalm, appear from the address of Jehoshaphat to the judges, whom he had instituted. (2 Chron. xix. 5—7.) He said to them, "*Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you: take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.*"

The Psalmist beholds the Lord as it were visibly stepping among his representatives on earth as Judge Supreme, calling them to account, because of their undermining and destroying the distinctions between right and wrong, for the preservation of which they had been instituted, (v. 2—4.) Deluded, they hear not—therefore the foundations of the earth begin to move, (v. 5.) They are addressed once more: "The *office* is indeed from the Lord, but ye, the bearers thereof, are mortal men," (v. 6, 7.) But from the conviction that even that admonition would prove fruitless, the Psalmist calls upon the Judge Supreme, that He, to whom everything which is opposed to the kingdom of God must yield after all, would bring an *effectual* judgment on earth against everything which opposes the Lord, (v. 8.)

1 A PSALM of Asaph.
God standeth in the congregation of the mighty:
He judgeth among the gods.
2 "How long will ye judge unjustly,
And take the part of the wicked? Selah.
3 Secure right to the poor and fatherless:
Do justice to the afflicted and needy.

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4 Deliver the poor and needy:
Rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked."
5 They know not, neither will they understand;
They walk on in darkness:
All the foundations of the earth totter.
6 "I have said, Ye *are* gods;
And all of you *are* children of the Most High.
7 But ye shall die like men,
And fall like one of the princes."
8 Arise, O God, judge the earth:
For thou shalt inherit all nations.

V. 1. It is the congregation of Israel in which the Lord appears as Judge Supreme, where no other judgment than that which is according to his eternal laws is permitted. (Psalm lxxiv. 2; cxlix. 2.) Because it is the office of judges to distribute recompense on earth in God's stead, and according to his justice and laws, they are in the Pentateuch called "gods." (Exod. xxii. 28.) They judge not for man, but as Jehoshaphat says, "*for the Lord, who is with them in the judgment.*"

V. 2—4. The Judge Supreme had for a long time been lenient to the unjust administrators of the divine office. Previous to his exercising effective judgments, he commissions his servants to proclaim the word of admonition. They make fellowship with the unjust, who are like them, and for the sake of covetousness withhold justice from the poor and the fatherless, for whose protection in particular earthly tribunals are invested with power. And is God, who is called the father of the fatherless and the judge of the widows, (Psalm lxviii. 6,) and has said, "Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow," (Deut. xxvii. 19,) to look at it with impunity? Here is the mighty consolation of those who have no strength and support of their own, that God, who has invested earthly tribunals with his power, for the special purpose of protecting the helpless against oppressors, will assuredly watch over their proceedings, and seize the sceptre when his *judges* pervert justice and become *oppressors*.

V. 5, 6. When mortals to whom God has lent strength forget that their strength is only a loan, and presume to regard themselves as *lords*, then their proud hearts get enshrouded with darkness and delusion so great that they become proof against all exhortation. The effects of that perversion are plain. Where righteousness and justice are perverted into injustice, the foundations of the earth get moved, for justice and law are the cements of families and states.

V. 7. God speaks once more. He says, as it were, "I have made you the bearers of My Godhead, the children of the Most

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High, in whom by virtue of your office, and the power reposed in that office, My Holy Godhead, which ruleth the world, may be seen as if reflected in a glass—but you who are the bearers of that power continue after all nothing more or less than what you are, mortal men; you are like other men and other potentates (2 Sam. ix. 11; Judges xvi. 7. 11; 1 Kings xix. 2) doomed to die; God in instituting you as his vicegerents means not to renounce his own judicial office." Death, which levels all men, is the most effective sermon for earthly rulers. Our Lord refers to this passage in John x. 34, when the Jews reviled him in that he made himself equal to God. "If he called them gods," said he, "unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, 'Thou blasphemest,' because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not *me*, believe the works: that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me and I in him." All this means, "If the Scriptures confer the name of gods on those unjust judges, because they are instituted to execute on earth the office and works of God, how much less offence ought you to take at *my* saying, I and my Father are one, I all whose works reveal the glory of the Father on earth."

V. 8. Aware that most of the potentates and nobles of the earth refuse to get wise by the thought of death, but that they think because their lands are called after their own names, therefore their houses shall continue for ever, (Ps. xlix. 12,) the Psalmist now calls upon the Judge of the world to execute an *effective* judgment, that mortals might know that they are vassals, and that he is the only Lord and Master, to whom everything must yield which is opposed to the kingdom of God. (Cf. ad. Ps. lix. 6, and vii. 7.)

PSALM LXXXIII.

A PSALM of supplication, composed when many nations from beyond Jordan and the South were threatening to destroy the people at once. It was sung in the reign of Jehoshaphat, at the critical juncture which is recorded 2 Chronicles xx. The chief enemies were the Edomites, from Mount Seir, south of Palestine; the Ishmaelites, an Arabian nation, who with the Midianites (Judges viii. 22. 24) resided south-east in the vicinity of Moab; still more to the east dwelt the Hagarenes, (1 Chron. v. 10; xix. 20,)—in the neighbourhood of Amalek, to the south, near Edom, there was Gebal—both Arabian tribes; the Ammonites lived in the east in

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the direction of Syria: to these came from the north-west Philistia and Tyre, and from the north the remote Assyria. It appears from verse 9 that the first-named lesser tribes, viz. the children of Lot (*i. e.* Ammon and Moab,) were their chief enemies. 2 Chronicles xx. states that a mighty host of the Moabites and Ammonites, and of the countries beyond Ammon,* had unexpectedly marched against Jehoshaphat; also from Syria,† (v. 2;) so that the king in great anxiety entered the temple and prayed, "O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? They come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jehaziel, a Levite of the sons of *Asaph*, who said, "Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but *God's*. To-morrow go ye down against them: behold they come up by the cliff of Ziz, and ye shall find them at the end of the valley before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not nor be dismayed: to-morrow go out against them, for the Lord will be with you." Those nations were already within a sixteen hours' march from Jerusalem. So far had they advanced on the desert road along the Dead Sea. The next morning Jehoshaphat went to meet them, while the people and the appointed singers were moving forward in the beauty of holiness, and sang, "Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever." And when they came to Mizpah, lo! they found the earth covered with dead bodies, with an abundance of riches and precious jewels, for dissensions had arisen among the enemies, and the one had killed the other; and Jehoshaphat and his people, laden with rich spoil, returned to Jerusalem with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets, unto the house of the Lord. It seems that all those tribes, as in a migration of nations, had left their countries with all their riches,

* 2 Chron. xx. 1, should be rendered "beyond" instead "beside the Ammonites."

† They marched round the southern point of the Dead Sea, "along the same road which to this day is frequented by the Arabs on their predatory excursions: it goes along the shore to Ain Dschedi (the well of goats;") to this day there remains a rocky pass, which goes up towards Jerusalem, which in 2 Chronicles xx. 16 is called "Ziz."—*Robinson's Palestine*, vol. ii. p. 446.

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to take at once possession of the land of Israel, as Jehoshaphat and the author of this psalm express it. (Cf. 2 Chron. xx. 11, with Psalm lxxxiii. 5. 13; cf. Keil on Chronicles, p. 246.) It is to be noticed, that the Psalmist has intentionally selected from ancient history the example of the Midianites, for as in the days of Jehoshaphat, it was the *Arabian* tribes, who were then assembled, "Midianites, Amalekites, Ishmaelites, and the children of the east;" (Judges vi. 33; vii. 12; viii. 24,) the victory of Gideon moreover coincides with this narrative, for it is said of the nations who fought with Midian that "*the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow.*" (Judges vii. 22.) The examples of Sisera and Jabin may possibly have been adduced because they were Canaanites (which term included the Phœnicians, Obad. 20,) and may therefore contain a more specific reference to enemies in the west. The historical books give no account of an alliance of the Philistines and Assyrians and the other nations, but their participation may have been like that of the Syrians* of a mediate kind, as in the days of David the Syrians came to the aid of the Ammonites, but had in their turn to ask Mesopotamia for help, (2 Sam. x. 16;) or those nations might simply have *promised* their aid.

Since Jehoshaphat and his Levites are said to have gone forth to meet the foe singing psalms, we may assume that it was this psalm which they sang, and that the Levite of the sons of Asaph, who is mentioned 2 Chron. xx. 14, is the author. He first invokes the Lord for the manifestation of his power, since the foe contemplated nothing less than the total destruction of *that* nation which was under his peculiar protection, (v. 2—5.) He reverts to ancient history, considering that it would not be the first time that the savage hordes of eastern nations had to succumb to the small band of those who had the Lord for their ally, (v. 6—13.) The people of God pray for victory, not only for the sake of temporal benefit, but that all the kingdoms of the earth should know that the nation which to a man confides in the Lord, may rely on him in times of the most imminent peril, (v. 14—19.)

1 A SONG *or* Psalm of Asaph.

2 Keep not thou silence, O God:
Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.
3 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult:
And they that hate thee have lifted up the head.
4 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people,
And consulted against thy hidden ones.

* Possibly 2 Chron. xx. 2, and 2 Sam. viii. 13, ought, according to another reading, to be rendered "Edom" instead of "Aram."

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5 They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation;
That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance."
6 For they have consulted together with one consent:
They are confederate against thee:
7 The tents of Edom, and the Ishmaelites;
Of Moab, and the Hagarenes;
8 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek;
The Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;
9 Assur also is joined with them:
He lends his arm to the children of Lot. Selah.
10 Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites;
As *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison:
11 *Which* perished at En-dor:
They became *as* dung for the earth.
12 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb:
Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:
13 Who said, "Let us take to ourselves
The houses of God in possession."
14 O my God, make them like a wheel (or, "whirlwind;")
As the stubble before the wind.
15 As the fire burneth a wood,
And as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;
16 So persecute them with thy tempest,
And make them afraid with thy storm.
17 Fill their faces with shame;
That they may seek thy name, O LORD.
18 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever;
Yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:
19 That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone *is* JEHOVAH,
Art the Most High over all the earth.

V. 2—5. The God of Israel addressed his people, not only by *words*, but by *works*. In faith they now pray for such an utterance by works. The foe has determined the destruction of that nation, to which it has been said, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." (Zech. ii. 8.) Ought not a people to whom this is said cast all their care upon God, though the whole world should rise up against them? Yea, they who lift up their head against them virtually lift it against their Covenant-God.

V. 6—10. The children of Lot come as enemies. The tribes, whom Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt, had spared, (2 Chron. xx. 10,) come now to requite their good with evil.

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Philistia, their old hereditary foe, has lent his aid, and as remote Mesopotamia strengthened the king of Syria by her forces when he marched against David, so now were the resources of the enemy increased from Syria or Assyria. The Psalmist probably mentions intentionally the name of the most distant nation.

V. 11—13. The day of Midian. The heart of an Israelite beats high at the remembrance of that day. "Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian." Such is the jubilant exclamation of Isaiah while about to describe the advent of the great kingdom of peace under Messiah. (Isa. ix. 4.) On that day Gideon, with three hundred valiant men, routed the people, "who lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and whose camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude." (Judges vii. 12.) On that day they cried, "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon*," and all their enemies were scattered. The Lord had then verified the words which the prophet had now told to Jehoshaphat, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." So it happened also when Deborah, the heroic woman, went with Barak against Sisera, the captain of the Philistines, and a woman smote a nail in his temples, (Judges iv. 21;) when Deborah sang, "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." (Judges v. 20.) Their captains should fall like Oreb and Zeeb, the captains of the Midianites; and their kings like Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of the Midianites, who in reliance on human strength had resolved to take the possession of God.

V. 14—19. All their might and power are to pass away swift and light as the stubble before the wind, as the splendour of the mountain wood, when the tempest sets it on fire from the base to its proud summit. The Psalmist contemplates even in their fall nothing but the glory of God. They should learn to know and seek the power of that name which they had insulted in His covenant people. History concludes the record of that miracle of the Lord in these words, "And the fear of the Lord was on all the kingdoms of those countries when they heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel." (2 Chron. xx. 29.) This was a revelation of the arm of the Lord similar to that when he struck Sennacherib with the plague under the walls of Jerusalem.

PSALM LXXXIV.

A SONG expressive of longing for the sanctuary at Jerusalem, sung by the Levites at Mahanaim; which one of David's Levites, placing

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himself in his royal master's position, composed during his flight before Absalom, when they were at Mahanaim, beyond Jordan. (Cf. ad. Psalms xlii. xliii. lxiii.)

Verses 10, 11, clearly show that this psalm refers to a king, who remote from the sanctuary feels an intense longing for it. No other kings were in exile before the destruction of Jerusalem beside the wicked Manasseh and Jeconiah. It cannot have been composed for the former, nor is it likely that it was for the latter, since in that case there would certainly be some reference to the ignominy of the nation at that time. Psalm xlii. 7 shows that it relates to the flight of David. We know that *he* (Psalms xxiii. xxvii. lxi. lxiii.; 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26,) longed for the sanctuary as his highest possession.

This beautiful psalm is replete with the peace of God. The longing for the sanctuary is symbolical of thirst for communion with God, (v. 2—5.) The procession to the house of God is symbolical of a walk *in* God and *with* God, which goes from strength to strength. The measure of the vividness of the Psalmist's contemplation is also the measure of the intensity of his prayer for his king, to be once more favoured with the sight of the sanctuary. He concludes in the confidence that he has not prayed in vain. (v. 10—13.)

1 TO the chief Musician, to the tune of Gath, a Psalm of the sons of Korah.
2 How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!
3 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth
For the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh rejoice
In the living God.
4 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house,
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,
Near thine altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King, and my God.
5 Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house:
They will be still praising thee. Selah.
6 Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee;
Who in their heart *remember thy* ways.
7 *Who* passing through the vale of tears* make it a well;
The rain also covereth it with blessings.
8 They go from strength to strength,
Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

* This is probably the same shrub which the Arabs still call "Baca," from its distilling an odoriferous gum, from the verb, "Bacha, to distil like tears."—*Translator.*

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9 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer:
Give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.
10 Behold, O God, our shield,
And look upon the face of thine anointed.
11 For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand.
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.
12 For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield:
The LORD will give grace and glory:
No good *thing* will he withhold
From them that walk uprightly.
13 O LORD of hosts,
Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.

V. 2—5. The recollection of his former enjoyments in the vicinity of the sanctuary causes the Psalmist to strengthen his longing for the sanctuary by introducing into it his own feelings towards the Lord. His soul longs for the courts,* for he was a Levite and not a priest. Priests only were permitted to approach the inner sanctuary. His humility is great, for the privilege of passing its very threshold is enough to fill him with rapturous delight. His longing, like that of the king in Psalm lxiii. 2, 3, weakens both heart and flesh. His soul rejoiceth in the *living* God. Yes, it must have been the living God, who makes himself felt and tasted by his people—none other than he could have infused yearnings for communion with him so great as to consume both body and soul. Irrational creatures, such as the sparrow and the swallow, unable to prize their privilege, enjoy what the bard and his king are deprived of. Ancient nations—the Arabs among their number—used to grant an asylum to birds within the sacred precincts of their temples, and even the buildings themselves. The walls of the Tabernacle were wooden, a yard deep, hung with carpets, and over these there was a double leather-hanging: the courts contained columns with capitals, where birds might easily build their nests. We have no information respecting the arrangement of the Tabernacle of Zion. The Psalmist probably refers to the sacred precincts, since the expression, "thine altars," cannot be understood in a strictly literal sense. The reason of the Psalm-

* The ancient Tabernacle had only one court, the court of the priests. This passage suggests therefore the idea of the Temple, (cf. lxv. 5; xcvi. 8; c. 4;) but, 1—the plural may be poetically used instead of the singular; 2—the court of the Tabernacle may already have had a compartment for the people, (Iken antig: sacra.;) 3—the bard may refer to the courts of the two sanctuaries, that on Zion as well as the Tabernacle, (cf. xv. 1.) The Tabernacle on Zion had two, and the Tabernacle several *doorkeepers*. (1 Chron. xvi. 38. 42.)

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lst's longing for the house of God is expressed in the words, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they shall praise thee for evermore." His soul longs for the praise of the Lord in the holy congregation. How much is needed until we find the greatest delight of our lives in the praise of the Lord!

V. 6—8. His imagination depicts the blessedness of being permitted to go up to Zion; he probably alludes to the holy pilgrims, who used to go up to Jerusalem to the three great feasts, singing psalms. The processions to the sanctuary are to him symbolical of a walk of communion with God. The tears which are shed on that road become rich fountains—yea, like the latter rain, which ripens the crops and yields rich blessings. This is the blessing of the tears which are shed in faith. Every station on that way yields new strength, and thus they go on—though weeping—on and ever onwards till they at last arrive in Zion. Is there a more beautiful figure of home-sick bearers of the cross who are on the pilgrimage to the heavenly Zion?

V. 9. He prays for that blessing. One so initiated in the delights and secrets of communion with God as he, heard no doubt the amen in his heart while he was yet praying.

V. 10, 11. The happiness of the Psalmist is intimately allied to that of the king. He prays so earnestly for the happiness of the latter, that it is clear to see that his own return to Zion depends on that of the anointed of the Lord. He may have been one of the doorkeepers, whom David had appointed on Zion and in the Tabernacle. The house of God in itself could never have been as delightful to him as was the *communion* with God, which he had realized there more than anywhere else. He had enjoyed more happiness in the courts of that communion with God, than is to be enjoyed in the fulness of the houses of the ungodly.

V. 12, 13. A pious heart, under the influence of God, receives from him what the material sun imparts to the outward man—light, warmth, and joy. Armed hosts here threatened peril—the band of David was small—but the Lord is a shield to his people, and in him, and not in men, have they reposed their hope.

PSALM LXXXV.

A SONG of complaint, composed during the time subsequent to the return of Israel from the captivity, when they had to contend with want and misery in their recovered land, and with hostile nations around them. Nehemiah, moved by their wretchedness, had obtained the permission of king Artaxerxes to go to their assistance; but even then there were strife and want in the newly

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founded city. (Neh. i. 3; chap. iv.) Psalm cxxvi. was composed under similar circumstances.

With a sense of unworthiness and guilt, the Psalmist (whose language bears a strong resemblance to the prayer of Nehemiah) regards it a great mercy that the Lord has turned the captivity, though he tastes the remainder of the wrath of God in the calamity and ignominy which still continue, (v. 2—8.) His faith assures him of the Divine promise that the help of the Lord is at hand, and he beholds in a vision the fulness of salvation, which is hereafter to come upon Zion, (v. 9—14.)

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

2 Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land:
Thou hast turned the captivity of Jacob.
3 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people,
Thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.
4 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath:
Thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.
5 Turn us, O God of our salvation,
And cause thine anger towards us to cease.
6 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?
Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?
7 Wilt thou not revive us again:
That thy people may rejoice in thee?
8 Show us thy mercy, O LORD,
And grant us thy salvation.
9 I will hear what God the LORD will speak:
For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:
If they turn not again to folly.
10 Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him;
That glory may dwell in our land.
11 Mercy and truth are met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*.
12 Truth shall spring out of the earth;
And righteousness shall look down from heaven.
13 Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is* good;
And our land shall yield her increase.
14 Righteousness shall go before him;
And shall set *us* in the way of his steps.*

V. 2—8. The Lord had punished the apostasy of Israel by delivering them into the hands of their oppressors and driving them

* Tholuck renders, "And he shall proceed in his ways."

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from the land of his inheritance. That punishment bore its fruit. The people tasted in it the anger of God; yea, they taste it in the residue of their affliction. They know with David that "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." (Psalm ciii. 10.) Hence they know, that though their apostasy deserved everlasting anger, it would not yet last for ever. The Psalmist is as sure of the mercy of God as he feels himself conscious of guilt.

V. 9—14. God makes epochs in the life of his servants, so that at times the transgressions of the past are forgiven and erased from the book of his remembrance. Man may then begin anew. The Psalmist predicts here such a time as coming, except new follies should bring new chastisements. He sees salvation approaching. It can only come when Israel shall be pure and holy. That shall be the time of which Isaiah prophesies, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. ix. 9.) The space between earth and heaven shall be filled with truth and righteousness. The land shall abound in blessings. (Cf. ad. Psalm lxvii. 7.) The Lord himself shall come to his people, righteousness shall be his harbinger, and none shall be able to stay him in his course.

PSALM LXXXVI.

A PLAINTIVE psalm of David, which seems to date from the time of the persecution of Saul. It is related to Psalm vi.

He prays in that assurance which springs from the knowledge of a pious and sincere heart, (v. 2—4,) of great trouble, (v. 1. 6, 7,) the certainty of Divine mercy, (v. 5,) and the power of Divine omnipotence, (v. 8—10.) He prays above all to be kept in the fear of the Lord, (v. 11,) having already richly experienced his mercy, (v. 12, 13.) He may therefore hope for present deliverance, and that protection which the Lord has promised to his children, (v. 14—17.)

1 A PRAYER of David.
Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me:
For I *am* poor and needy.
2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy:
O thou, my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.

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8 Be merciful unto me, O Lord:
For I cry unto thee daily.
4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant:
For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
5 For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive;
And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee:
6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer;
And attend to the voice of my supplications.
7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee:
For thou wilt answer me.
8 Among the gods *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord:
Neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.
9 All nations whom thou hast made
Shall come and worship before thee, O Lord;
And shall glorify thy name.
10 For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things:
Thou *art* God alone.
11 Teach me thy way, O LORD;
I will walk in thy truth:
Unite my heart to fear thy name.*
12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart:
And I will glorify thy name for evermore.
13 For great *is* thy mercy toward me:
And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.
14 O God, the proud are risen against me,
And the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my soul;
And have not set thee before them.
15 But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious,
Longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.
16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me;
Give thy strength unto thy servant,
And save the son of thine handmaid.
17 Show me a token for good;
That they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed:
Because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

V. 1. Although our poverty and need are by no means the highest and ultimate grounds on which the unanswerableness of our prayers is based, it is nevertheless certain that God has declared

* Tholuck renders, "Keep my heart to the one thing—to fear thy name."

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it to be his peculiar office to help the poor, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord," (Psalm xii. 6:) on the other hand, it is equally certain that men do not begin to call upon the Lord, until the earth can no longer satisfy them, and they feel that they are poor and needy.

V. 2—4. There is nothing more loathsome to God than hypocrisy. David knows this, and seeks to obtain the assurance of his conscience that his love and trust in God are sincere, that he calls upon him and longs for him more than for anything besides. Should it be said, "If the confidence of prayer were based in this, then the door of prayer would be shut to gross offenders," we answer, that *sincere repentance* is an equally solid foundation for the support of a praying sinner, and an equally potent means of protection for the encouragement of a doubting conscience.

V. 5—7. What would all human sincerity and holiness avail, if God were to deal with us according to *justice?* David's first support lies therefore in the love and mercy of God—which are attainable on the one condition, that man *call upon* and *seek* the Lord in his trouble. He applies that universal condition to himself, (v. 6,) declaring (v. 7,) that he had cried to the Lord not effeminately nor on trivial grounds, but in trouble so great, that none but he could send deliverance.

V. 8—10. There are two kinds of doubt which in temptation interpose between ourselves and God—either, whether God *would*, or whether he *could*, help us. David had repelled the former, and now shows that the latter also cannot prevail against him. Whenever a human being on earth has obtained help, that help comes from the Lord, for idols, the offspring of human thought, which are worshipped by the heathen, are utterly impotent. The Psalmist is so thoroughly affected by this truth, that he realizes the prophetic presentiment that every nation should eventually worship *Him*. He states this great hope with a profound allusion to its final cause, namely, "*All the heathen whom thou hast made.*" Indeed no greater contradiction is to be conceived than that the spirit derived from God should for ever be unmindful of its origin. Verse 8 might give rise to the supposition that he referred to other gods *besides* the God of Israel. But who are the gods of the heathen, if the God of Israel has made all the heathen? He furnishes the unmistakeable reply by saying in verse 10, "Thou art God alone."

V. 11. Although immersed in outward trouble, we find that the Psalmist, after the manner of real men of prayer, prefaces the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread, and deliver us from evil," by the petition, "Let thy name be hallowed in me." He confesses that his mind is as yet imperfectly illumined and his heart imperfectly fixed on God; stamping as untrue every standard and rule of life which is contrary to the eternal laws of God, he prays that by growing enlightenment he might attain to a more perfect know-

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ledge of the ways of God, and that all the interests and desires which usually affect the hearts of men, might in his case become subordinate to the one thing needful, "to fear the name of the Lord."

V. 12, 13. He contemplates the paramount importance of his petition, "to fear the name of the Lord with an undivided heart." He has already experienced mercy so great and undeserved, that his gratitude for it shall never cease. The deliverances of the Lord ought to be received in such a manner that every one of them should bring us a step nearer to heaven, and prompt us to serve the Lord with a more undivided heart.

V. 14—16. He refers now to his outward trouble. His adversaries are they who have not set the Lord before them—who take even offence at his filial piety, as appears from verse 17 and other Psalms. The ground of his hope that the Lord would grant his prayer lies neither in a sense of innocence, nor personal claims, to which he feels himself entitled, but in that glorious name which the Lord has given himself. (Exod. xxxiv. 6.) David appropriates his share of the blessing, which lies in that name of the Lord, not according to a specific prerogative, whether as king or a favourite of God, but resting on a title which he held in common with the meanest in Israel, that of a *servant* of God.

V. 17. His desire is that the whole world might see that none trust the Lord in vain. His enemies had reproached the faith which he had exhibited in his affliction. He prays that their unbelief should be put to shame, which unfits them to think of a living God, for ever working by love, and causes them to regard the Lord as an indolent being, who, deaf to the cry of his children, shuts himself up in heaven. These words do not, as some think, necessarily imply David's asking for some specific or miraculous token, (Psalm lxxi. 7:) he regards deliverance itself as a token. We ask whether it be not true, that in the measure as we recognize the mysteriously governing influence of God in every day events, we regard those things as signs and miracles, which to others appear as common-place?

PSALM LXXXVII.

A GLORIOUS psalm. Its theme is the great hope of the conversion of the world to the sanctuary of Zion. The supposition that its date is to be referred to the time of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, is highly probable, from the fact that several psalms of the sons of Korah celebrate in consequence of that event the praises of Jerusalem, (Psalm xlvi. xlviii. lxxvi.) and

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connect similar hopes with them. (Psalm xlvi. 11; lxxvi. 12.) It might be objected to this supposition, that Babylon and not Assyria is mentioned as offering homage, and that Babylon did only then begin to get more known in Palestine. But it may also be used as a confirmation. It is said (Psalm lxxvi. 12,) that the surrounding nations should offer gifts; we know also that Babylon sent an embassy, (*vide* ad. Psalm xlviii. 10, 11;) and 2 Chron. xxxii. 23 states that other nations brought gifts for Hezekiah and the temple. As has been remarked ad. Psalm lxxviii. 12, the probable reference is to the Egyptians and the Ethiopians, who were equally endangered by Sennacherib. Does this not render it probable that the Psalmist should specify those nations which brought gifts, and on that account name Babylon and be silent about Assyria? Philistia may have belonged to them, since Hezekiah had but lately reduced the Philistines to subjection. (2 Kings xviii. 8.) Add to all this, that Isaiah, who wrote at that time, gives expression to similar hopes. He says of Ethiopia, "At that day shall a present be brought to the Lord of hosts from the nation extended and fierce—the people terrible from the district beyond (Meroe,) a nation most mighty and victorious, whose land is cut through by rivers, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the Mount Zion." (Isaiah xviii. 7.) And of Egypt and Assyria, "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." (Isa. xix. 24, 25.)

A PSALM *or* Song of the Sons of Korah.

1 HIS FOUNDATION IS IN THE HOLY MOUNTAINS.
2 THE LORD LOVETH THE GATES OF ZION
MORE THAN ALL THE DWELLINGS OF JACOB.
3 Glorious things are spoken of thee,
O city of God. Selah.
4 "I will name Rahab and Babylon among them that know me:
Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia;
These were born there."
5 And of Zion it shall be said,
This and that man was born in her:
And the highest himself shall establish her.
6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the nations:
These were born there. Selah.
7 Singers and dancers:
All my springs *of joy are* in thee.

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V. 1. The Psalmist in praising the everlasting foundations of Jerusalem, has probably still before his mind's eye the miraculous deliverance of the city, which has but just transpired, (see Psalms xlviii. 4; xlvi. 5, 6.) Since the gates of a city form a chief portion of its fortifications, the phrase, "Gates of Zion," is to be regarded as a poetic description of the whole of Zion, just as Zion, as a chief portion of the city, designates the entire city, (see v. 3.) On that account "mountains" are spoken of (the city being built on three hills, Psalm cxxv. 2,) which are here called the "holy mountains," because they became holy on account of the sanctuaries which were erected on them. There is no reference to Jerusalem according to her earthly aspects, with her streets, and walls, and palaces. Why should that be loved more than all the dwellings of Jacob? The reference is to the eternal glory of Jerusalem, in that it was the centre of adoration of the true God. If that city where the king resides is the capital, the eye and crown of a country, how much more is Jerusalem the eye and crown of the land, where the Lord resides in the sanctuary, worshipped by all Israel! "Glorious things are spoken of thee." Is it possible that more glorious things can be said of a city, than that as the heart with the fount of its warm blood is placed in the centre of the body, so she is placed in the midst of the nations, that out of her should be carried to them the knowledge of the only true God and of his Son? He hears her spoken of by myriads of voices, but he hears first the Lord himself proclaiming the future glory of Zion.

V. 2—4. The nations arise in rapid succession—they are astonished, and engage in praises, (v. 5.) At last, as if instructed by their voices, the Psalmist himself begins the praise, (v. 6, 7.) The miracles which the mighty arm of the Lord had then achieved before Jerusalem—when he made "wars to cease unto the end of the earth," (Psalm xlvi. 10,) when foreign nations, in acknowledgment of the works of the God of Israel, came with gifts—might well originate the presentiment of a time when the God of Israel should be acknowledged as the only God on earth. "To be born" in the holy city, *i. e.* to belong to her as a child; we Christians, as many of us as are of heathen extraction, must recognize our spiritual mother in the congregation of Israel. Was it not the Christian mother Church of Jerusalem that gave her breasts to the entire heathen world, which with the Son scattered the knowledge of the Father over the earth? Are not we the branches of the wild olive tree, that have grafted upon the good olive tree? (Rom. xi. 17.) All the nations which are here specified—Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, and Abyssinia—became all engrafted at the time when love and missionary zeal were glowing in the Christian Church, and regarded Zion as their spiritual mother. That was the glorious time when it was said of them other Church, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry

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aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." (Isa. liv. 1.) And again, "Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side." (Isa. lx. 4.)

V. 5. One shall tell the other how many nations shall find in her their spiritual home: it will be seen that it is the Lord who builds her so gloriously.

V. 6. The Lord will enrol his new citizens in the book of life, as Isaiah says, "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." (Isa. iv. 3.)

V. 7. Every spring of joy shall be opened there. Isaiah says of the day of Messiah, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." (Isa. xii. 3.) They shall for ever praise the Lord with songs, the timbrel, and the dance. (Psalm cxlix. 3; cl. 4; cf. Exod. xv. 20.)

PSALM LXXXVIII.

HEMAN, the author of this psalm, is probably the Levite chief musician of David, who (1 Chron. vi. 33; xv. 17) is mentioned along with Ethan,* (vi. 44; xv. 17,) as also the very next psalm is ascribed to Ethan, the Ezrahite. Heman, the Levite, who is called (1 Chron. xxv. 1. 5) a seer, *i. e.* a prophet and chief musician, was of the race of Kahath, the son of Levi, of whom Korah also was descended, so that this psalm may be ascribed to the Korahites in general, but to Heman in particular.

A song of deep complaint, the occasion of which is not known. His despair is so great that he was unable, as is the case in other psalms, to rise to joyous confidence by means of his song; but while a mourner can still carry his sorrow to the Lord, and call upon him as his Saviour, hope cannot entirely have fled from his soul.

1 A SONG *or* Psalm of the sons of Korah. To the chief Musician, to be sung to the flute (?) an instruction of Heman the Ezrahite.

2 O Lord God of my salvation,
I have cried day *and* night before thee;

* On the difficulties see the remarks on the title of Psalm lxxxix.

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8 Let my prayer come before thee:
Incline thine ear unto my cry;
4 For my soul is full of troubles:
And my life draweth nigh unto Sheol;
5 I am counted with them that go down into the pit:
I am as a man *that hath* no strength:
6 I *am* alone among the dead,
Like the slain that lie in the grave,
Whom thou rememberest no more:
And they (who) are cut off from thy hand.
7 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,
In darkness, in the deeps.
8 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,
And thou hast oppressed *me* with all thy waves. Selah.
9 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me;
Thou hast made me an abomination unto them:
I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.
10 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction:
LORD, I have called daily upon thee,
I have stretched out my hands unto thee,
11 "Wilt thou show wonders to the dead?
Shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah.
12 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?
Or thy faithfulness in destruction?
13 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?
And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"
14 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD;
And in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.
15 LORD, why castest thou off my soul?
Why hidest thou thy face from me?
16 *I am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up:
While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.
17 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me;
Thy terrors stifle me.
18 They surround me daily like water;
They compass me about together.
19 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me,
And mine acquaintance into darkness.

V. 2—10. The troubles of the complaining bard are very great. His energies are checked, his friends have deserted him, and he appears to himself like one of the dead, who are insensible to the

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genial sun, and removed from the favour and protection of God.* In the measure as the night of melancholy is gloomy and enwraps all around in her sable fold, must our admiration rise for the faith of him who withal continues in prayer. The faith of the tempted may appear like an extremely slender thread—for such is the effect of melancholy—but the thread, which under such serious circumstances does not break, cannot be altogether powerless; it is stronger than the most courageous confidence of sunny days. The Psalmist, as he states in verse 9, sees no outlet, but he *believes* in one, else why should he pray?

V. 11—13. There is silence in the land of the dead; we Christians clearly know that their Hallelujah shall hereafter put to shame the unbelievers, who used to mock at their confidence on earth; though now they triumph over their silent graves, and the name of God, in which the former used to confide, becomes a reproach here. The troubled bard prays on that account to be delivered from going down into the pit in his dumb pain, that he might still be privileged to declare the glory and honour of the Lord in the land of the living. (Psalm vi. 6.)

V. 14—19. He lives with God; from early morn to the eve he lives with *him;* this is evident from his pouring out his soul before the Lord at early morn. It may therefore be assumed that though his prayer dies away in the accents of complaint, the light of hope continued to burn in his soul.

PSALM LXXXIX.

A PLAINTIVE psalm of a faithful subject who lived during the last period of the Jewish empire, probably in the days of Jeconiah, (cf. v. 46,) who after a reign of three months was deposed by Nebuchadnezzar, and carried into exile after having witnessed the plundering of the temple. (2 Kings xxiv.) How much he was loved and mourned for by his people, appears from Jer. xxii. 24—29. The conclusion of the psalm sounds almost as if the king himself were complaining of his humiliation, especially verse 48; but that verse is perfectly intelligible on the supposition that the Psalmist was the king's friend, and if the rendering of verse 19, which we have given in a note, should be correct, the king can in no wise be regarded as the author. It has been shown in Psalms xlii. lxxxiv., that Korahite Levites used to compose psalms in the

* "A poetical description of the condition of the dead, not as it is in reality, but as it appears to us."—*J. D. Michælis.*

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soul of David, *i. e.* identifying their interests so completely with his that they spoke in his name. The historical references which we have furnished would contradict the title, if Ethan the Ezrahite is held to be the Levite musician of that name, or that Ethan the Ezrahite who was famed for his wisdom,* 1 Kings iv. 31; v. 11.

The Psalmist begins in joyous and trustful strains, with his conviction of the infallibility of the promise made to David, (v. 2—5.) The grounds of his *faith* are the majesty and the power of God, which rule universal nature, while it is the ground of his *hope* that this God is the King of Israel, (v. 6—19.) Thus confirming his heart in faith and hope, he reminds God of the promises which David had received by Nathan, (v. 20—38,) but gives free course to his complaints, that the calamities of the present presented a striking contrast to the glory of those prospects, (v. 39—52.)

1 AN Instruction of Ethan the Ezrahite.

2 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever;
With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.
3 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever:
Thy faithfulness hast thou established in the very heavens.
4 "I have made a covenant with my chosen,
I have sworn unto David my servant,
5 Thy seed will I establish for ever,
And build up thy throne to all generations. Selah."
6 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD:
Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.
7 For who in the clouds can be compared unto the LORD?
Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?
8 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints,
And to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him.
9 O LORD God of hosts, who *is* a strong LORD like unto thee?
Or to thy faithfulness round about thee?
10 Thou rulest the raging of the sea:
When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.
11 Thou hast broken Egypt in pieces, as one that is slain;
Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.

* But he seems to have been none other than the Levite. *See* Keil on Chronicles, p. 164, on 1 Chron. ii. 6, and Movers on Chronicles, p. 237.

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12 The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine:
As for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.
13 The north and the south thou hast created them:
Tabor and Hermon rejoice in thy name.
14 Thou hast a mighty arm:
Strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand.
15 Justice and judgment *are* the foundation of thy throne:
Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.
16 Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound:
They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.
17 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day:
And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.
18 For thou *art* the glory of their strength:
And by thy favour our horn shall be exalted.
19 For the LORD *is* our shield:
And the Holy One of Israel *is* our king.*
20 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one,
And saidst, "I have laid help upon *one that* is mighty;
I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.
21 I have found David my servant;
With my holy oil have I anointed him:
22 With whom my hand shall be established:
Mine arm also shall strengthen him.
23 The enemy shall not overwhelm him;
Nor the son of wickedness quench him.
24 And I will beat down his foes before his face,
And plague them that hate him.
25 But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him:
And in my name shall his horn be exalted.
26 I will set his hand also in the sea,
And his right hand in the rivers.
27 He shall cry unto me, "Thou *art* my father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation."
28 Also I will make him *my* firstborn,
Higher than the kings of the earth.
29 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore,
And my covenant shall stand fast with him.
30 His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever,
And his throne as the days of heaven.

* Or, "For from the Lord is our shield, and from the Holy One in Israel our King."

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31 If his children forsake my law,
And walk not in my judgments;
32 If they profane my statutes,
And keep not my commandments;
33 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod,
And their iniquity with stripes.
34 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him,
Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
35 My covenant will I not break,
Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
36 Once have I sworn by my holiness
That I will not lie unto David.
37 His seed shall endure for ever,
And his throne as the sun before me.
38 It shall be established for ever as the moon,
And the witness in heaven is faithful. Selah.
39 But thou hast cast off and abhorred,
Thou hast been wrath with thine anointed.
40 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant:
Thou hast profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground.
41 Thou hast broken down all his hedges;
Thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin.
42 All that pass by the way spoil him:
He is a reproach to his neighbours.
43 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries;
Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.
44 Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword,
And hast not made him to stand in the battle.
45 Thou hast made his splendour to cease,
And cast his throne down to the ground.
46 The days of his youth hast thou shortened:
Thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.
47 How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever?
Shall thy wrath burn like fire?
48 Remember how short my time is:
To what vanity thou hast made all men.
49 What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death?
Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of Sheol? Selah.
50 Lord, where *are* thy eternal lovingkindnesses,
Which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?
51 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants;
How I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people;

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52 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD;
Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.
Blessed *be* the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

V. 2—5. The Psalmist, from the full assurance of the infallibility of Divine promise, begins with praising in the name of all generations the mercy of God, whose faithfulness, far exalted above earth and its changes, is established in the heavens. His confidence is the result of a Divine promise, the burden of which he relates. From a comparison of this trustful beginning with his sad complaint from verse 39 downwards, we may gather the true state of mind of devout people in great affliction. They are neither so callous and insensible, that the stroke of the proving hand of God makes no impression upon them, nor so soft and indolent that they at once lose all their confidence. Their eyes shed tears while joy sits enthroned on their brow.

V. 6—15. Little-minded mortals, overcome by adversities, frequently doubt the faithfulness of God. But the wonderful ways of the Lord are known and his faithfulness praised in the congregation of the saints in heaven. He is God alone. The might and strength of the inhabitants of heaven are his gift. He has the ability to fulfil his promises, while his faithfulness, which encircles him like a stream, is the pledge of his *willingness*. He is the God who of old restrained the billows of the main, when he led his people through it, and slew the sea-monster* of Egypt. He is the God who created the heavens and the earth. How then should the heavens and the earth be able to refuse obedience to his commandments? He has made the north and the south, Tabor in the west and snowy Hebron in the east. He has made them as it were the visible praises of his name. Immoveable justice controls his invincible arm, and mercy and truth are for ever before his face. Where is the doubter?

V. 16—19. The people may well rejoice who worship this God, and are called to his feasts by the sound of the trumpet: their strength is in their strong God. The *horn* is the symbol of strength and power. (1 Sam. ii. 1; Ps. xcii. 11.)

V. 20—38. Reverting to the Divine promise of verses 4, 5, which is preserved in 2 Samuel vii., he now details it poetically. (The author of Psalm cxxxii., which was composed on the occasion of the removal of the ark into the temple of Solomon, supplicates in virtue of this promise mercy for the king.) Nathan, namely, "thy holy one," addressed David, not of his own accord, but he heard the word of God in a moment of prophetic ecstasy, *i. e.* in a *vision*.

* Cf. Gesenius Thesaur. sub. v. רָהַב

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The term vision is used in the prophets of revelations to the mind, even when they heard the utterance of the Divine voice within. (Isa. ii. 2; Hab. ii. 2.) David was not of royal extraction—he was raised from the *people*, to the end that his election should be altogether the Lord's doing. He experienced the paternal favour of the Lord: the young shepherd became a sovereign whose dominions extended from the shores of the Mediterranean to the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. If the kings of the earth, because invested with great might and glory, as well as the administration of justice, are called *par excellence*, the *sons of God*, then David, who had been raised from the people, and only desired to be an instrument in the hands of God, was the *first-born* among them. The sceptre of Israel is to remain for ever with his posterity. His descendants, on transgressing, shall indeed feel the Father's chastisement, but the mercy of God shall never depart from David as it was removed from Saul. (2 Sam. vii. 15.) Men are accustomed to speak of things terrestrial as subjected to change, and of things celestial as exalted above it. So when the sacred bards wish to indicate eternal duration, they mention the duration of the sun and the moon. (Jer. xxxiii. 20; *see* ad. Psalm lxxii. 17.) The witness is not less trustworthy than the testimony is mighty: for he is not a man who might speak the untruth, but he is the witness *in the clouds*.* The promise which here receives so solemn an attestation from God, would, however, have remained unfulfilled, if after the fall of David's kingdom, the branch had not sprouted forth from the felled stem of Jesse, whose kingdom over the spiritual Israel shall never come to an end. (Jer. xi. 2; Luke i. 32, 33.)

V. 39—46. The gloomy present is now, after the manner of Ps. xliv. 10, placed side by side of the glorious promises and former doings of God. Psalm lxxx. describes the sad condition of the last days of the kingdom in similar terms. "Thou hast shortened the days of his youth," may be paraphrased by, "Thou hast made him by trouble an old man in his youth," with which the following clause, "Thou hast covered him with shame," well agrees.

V. 47—52. Convinced that this life is not given to man for the exclusive purpose of his consuming it in grief and pain, the Psalmist earnestly prays for *speedy* refreshment, especially since death is frequently so early and sudden in its appearance. His prayer is chiefly for the king, but the ignominy of the king is also that of his faithful servants; he, therefore, complains no less of the ignominy of the servants of God than of his own.

* Jewish and Christian interpreters understand this of the *rainbow*, but the rainbow which appears when the sun pierces the rainy clouds is, according to Gen. ix. 14, 15, simply the pledge that the flood is not to re-appear.

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PSALM XC.

A BEAUTIFUL song, replete with solemnity and sadness, as hearty as it is solemn. It is not difficult to recognize in it the voice of the ancient lawgiver.* The ancient bard looks to God at the close of a life rich in trials and the experience of many hard visitations, especially of a fearful mortality of his fellows, and with an unfinished task before him. He looks to the omnipotent eternal God, whom he has known as the refuge of his people, and longs for the renewal of the lifting up of his gracious countenance. The psalm opens with the expression of his faith, firm as a rock, in the eternal God, (v. 2.) Human life appears especially short if contrasted with the eternity of God, (v. 3—6.) The wrath of God against sin is the cause that life gets so shortened, (v. 7—10.) Men do not consider this: he prays, therefore, for true wisdom, (v. 11, 12.) An enterprise is at hand, in which the people need a gracious God: the Psalmist prays, therefore, for the Lord's gracious return, (v. 13—17.)

A PRAYER of Moses the man of God.

1 Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.
2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God.
3 Thou turnest man to dust:
And sayest, "Return, ye children of men."
4 For a thousand years in thy sight
Are but as yesterday when it is past,
And *as* a watch in the night.
5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood;
They are *as* a sleep:
In the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up.
6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up;
In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

* The sublime pathos and solemnity of this psalm mount to the Divine. Its manner and matter are original and powerful, and would justly be ascribed to Moses the man of God, if the motives were more accurately known which justified the collector in that supposition. Moses might well have been seized by the solemn thoughts of this psalm at the end of his career in the wilderness. It is evident that the bard is a man grown old in mighty enterprises, and stands on the verge of life."—*Ewald.* See also the remarks of *Stier* on the affinities of the language of this psalm and that of Moses.

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7 For we are consumed by thine anger,
And by thy wrath are we troubled (or, "we pass away.")
8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee,
Our unknown *sin* in the light of thy countenance.
9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath:
We spend our years as a tale *that is told.**
10 The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten;
And if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years,
Yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow:
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.
11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger?
Even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath.†
12 So teach *us* to number our days,
That we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.
13 Return, O LORD, how long?
And have mercy upon thy servants.
14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy;
That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
15 Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us,
And the years *wherein* we have seen evil.
16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants,
And thy glory unto their children.
17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us;
And establish thou the work of our hands upon us;
Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

V. 1, 2. It is our great consolation to know that God *changes not*, and that the God of our fathers is our God. The retrospect of Moses extended only over the then brief history of his people and that of the patriarchs. The range of our retrospect is greater and more extensive by far, and on that account more potent to strengthen our faith, for it embraces the innumerable host of godly men, whose experience falls under our inspection, who read the words of Moses three and thirty centuries after he had penned them. God, who was *before* any creature, is also much greater than anything which he has created. The creature may well look up to him. In writing the following words the Psalmist has before his mind's eye the history of creation, and regards the mountains which appeared above the surface of the waters as the oldest children of the earth, (cf. Psalm civ. 5—8.)

V. 3—6. That address to God leads to the thought, which fills

* Or, "Our years pass away as a thought."
† Luther: "Who is afraid, as he ought, of thy wrath?"

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his mind, the sad thought of the frailty of human life. As long as the eyes of men are not turned heavenwards, and simply range among the creatures of the earth, the sense of that frailty is not so profound, for multitudes of creatures count their life by the day or the hour, while man counts it by *years!* Moreover, how great is the skill of most men to shut the thought of death completely out of their minds. (Ps. xlix. 12.) Moses describes human frailty *with regard to the eternity of God.* The generations of men change before God, as if their were but a moment between their coming and going: now he suffers one generation to pass away and now another to arise.* The future seems long to us, but the past short beyond measure. Short seems the day which has been spent in labour, still shorter a watch of the night (the Hebrews used to count three) which has passed during our sleep. The life of man is equally fleet before God. When it is passed, it appears even to man to condense as a night's sleep into one moment. It is like the grass in the east, which after a fruitful shower grows up high as if by a magic spell, but which, when the scorching east wind passes over it, completely withers within two days, (James i. 11,) is cut down and used for fuel.

V. 7—10. The remembrance of the longevity of the patriarchs had no doubt been preserved: it gradually decreased, and there were probably few who, in the days of Moses, lived more than a hundred years. But on those who had left Egypt as adults fell the specific Divine judgment, that with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, not one of their number was held worthy to enter the promised land, and that they should die during their forty years' wanderings in the desert, so that none lived more than eighty years. Moses felt justified in complaining that the wrath of God was shortening human life, inasmuch as disease, infirmity of old age, and the struggle of death, with its cold perspiration, did not belong to the original destiny of man; "for though horses, cows, and other beasts die, their death is not owing to the wrath of God, but a transient necessity. But the death of man is a grievous trouble, because man is a creature destined to be like God." (Luther.) Moses was therefore right in ascribing the brevity of human life to the wrath of God on account of sin, since no doubt sin, the pas-

* *Luther:* "It happens that just as men die daily because of sin, so others are born daily, but on the same condition as those who died," (cf. Psalm civ. 29, 30.) Modern expositors render with reference to Gen. iii. 19, "Return to the dust, ye children of men," so Aben Ezra and Kimchi. But could then the "to the dust" be dispensed with? The sentence moreover would be too tautological, hence several have unduly strained the ו *e. g.* Amyraldus: Nec id (dying) uni aut alteri tantum accidit. Sententia est, quam de omnibus in universum pronuncias, cum dicis: filii hominum, *etc.* Many old commentators, Bucer, Strigel, Calov, Cocceius, Geier, understand "return ye" of the resuscitation after the resurrection.

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sions, intemperance, covetousness, and unkindness, *etc.* are the chief causes of the gradual diminution of human longevity, while the evil consequences of sin are to be regarded as Divine punishments. The Psalmist was the more justified in his assertion, from his daily experience in witnessing the death of a generation of six hundred thousand men. He deemed it necessary to remind us that after all, our sense of the enormity of sin is but incomplete, and that therefore we are more guilty before God than we are aware. He refers therefore to sin, which though hid to us is known to God; for how much is needed to attain to a right conception of but one sin, *e. g.* of our murmuring against God in trials. He names threescore years and ten as the common term of human life, an age which in our days is reached by a few only, and the average would be about threescore years. Moses, indeed, lived to the good old age of a hundred and twenty years, but this must be regarded as an exception, for Joshua speaks of himself as highly favoured in having retained the strength of manhood up to his eighty-fifth year. (Josh. xiv. 11.) Moses connects his complaints of the brevity of human life with those of its troubles. The words of Job are very apposite: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." (Job xiv. 1.) Moses therefore was not satisfied with what are commonly termed the joys of life; his *vocation* was particularly difficult and trying during the hardship of the journey through the desert and in the struggle with an ever obstinate people.* This sentiment will be found to hold universally true the more men try to go through life on the "*narrow way;*" "and though it was a delightful life, it was yet labour and vanity." How could it be otherwise, even if we simply bear in mind that "all that will live godly shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. iii. 12.) The Psalmist says, "labour and vanity," adding, "for it is soon cut off and we fly away." Our most delightful hours, as far as they are of purely earthly origin, are *hours* only, and they are gone before we have thoroughly enjoyed them.

V. 11, 12. How difficult is it to bring men to recognize in the troubles of life the chastening hand of God, and to induce them to walk in the fear of the Lord. They say, as St. Jerome once said in plaintive strains, that men would be worse off than beasts if they were, besides all the misery of life, still to believe in the wrath of God both here and hereafter. Some regard the troubles of life simply as the fate of blind necessity, saying that death ought neither to be desired nor feared. Most men take not even the trouble of thinking about it, and live as if there were neither death nor God: few, few only get *humbled* by trouble, and turn their eyes

* Luther renders Numb. xii. 3, "Moses was *sorely tried* above all the men which were upon the face of the earth;" but the E. V. is more correct; so also Hengstenberg's Authenticity of the Pentateuch, vol. i. 174.

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meekly and penitently to the direction from whence their strokes come. How touching is this humble prayer for true wisdom in the mouth of the much-tried lawgiver. He desires to attain to greater obedience to the Divine commandments in consideration of the wrath of God on account of sin.

V. 13—17. When the Lord purchased his people and led them forth out of Egypt, his mercy was richly visible over them, "as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him. But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked: then he forsook God who made him. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked him to anger. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." Thus complains Moses in his last song, (Deut. xxxii. 11—20;) he had to share a portion of the wrath of God, (Deut. xxxii. 50, 51; Numb. xx. 12; cf. Psalm xcv. 8—11.) This explains his prayer for the return of Divine favour, that the Lord would satisfy them "early," *i. e.* soon, with his mercy, once more act a father's part to them, the more so, as the solution of the great problem was at hand—they had reached the frontiers of the land for the possession of which they were to fight. We know from the life of Moses how thoroughly he was instructed in the truth that through the Lord we can do valiantly—and have in this place another testimony of the same truth: the importunate repetition of his prayer shows how well he knew that everything depends on the blessing of God.

PSALM XCI.

A JOYOUS psalm, full of the assurance of faith.* The precentor promises, the chorus vows, and finally, the Lord himself gives the promise.

The Precentor.

1 HE that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

The Choir.

2 I will say of the LORD,
He is my refuge and my fortress:
My God; in him will I trust.

* Is it possible to set forth the providence of God in a more trustful and tender manner?

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The Precentor.

8 Surely he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
And from the noisome pestilence.
4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust:
His truth *is thy* shield and buckler.
5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;
Nor for the arrow *that* flieth by day;
6 *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness;
Nor for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.
7 *Though* a thousand fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand;
It shall not come nigh thee.
8 Yea* with thine eyes shalt thou behold
And see the reward of the wicked.

The Choir.

9 Yea, thou, O Lord, *art* my refuge.

The Precentor.

The Most High thou hast made thy habitation.
10 There shall no evil befall thee,
No plague shall come nigh thy dwelling.
11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee,
To keep thee in all thy ways.
12 They shall bear thee up in *their* hands,
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:
The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

The Precentor and the Choir.

14 "Because he hath set his love upon me,
Therefore will I deliver him:
I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.
15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:
I will be with him in trouble:
I will deliver him, and honour him,
16 With long life will I satisfy him,
And show him my salvation."

* רק is used in the same sense Psalm xxxii. 6, cf. Köster.

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V. 1. Though there is nothing more common than for men to profess that they are under the protection of the Most High, yet are there but few who really believe what that profession involves. The Psalmist invites us to consider what such a profession implies. No power in heaven or on earth can prevail against the Most High, for he is *Almighty*. Men who are under his protection may discard all their fears.

V. 2. He is confident of his ability to pray to the Almighty in faith as to his reconciled God—his trust and hope. That faith has its steps and degrees. It is but rarely, and even then only for a limited period, that we witness man's faith so confident of his union with God, and of his being an instrument of the Lord, as to entertain an absolute certainty under even particular circumstances, that his prayer will be granted and his work prosper. It is known to all that every work performed in the Lord must *eventually* prosper, and that in the hour of danger things cannot happen to us otherwise than as the Lord has determined them, and as they are beneficial to us. It is a great thing not to stagger in this conviction. But he only is a truly prophetic man who feels in his own heart what the Lord intends to do in present emergency, and speaks and acts according to his assurance. Only to this highest degree of faith belongs the promise which the Psalmist goes on to set forth; this is in perfect harmony with the promises which our Lord himself has made to faith. (Matt. xvii. 20; Luke x. 19; Mark xvi. 17, 18.)

V. 3—8. A voice from heaven seems to accompany the promise of God, that no persecution is able to hurt believers, but that the pinions of the Lord shall cover them as a hen spreads her wings over her chicken, and that every arrow shall fall back powerless from the certainty of his promise. The Psalmist expands this thought on account of the variety of dangers and perils to which we are exposed. We may paraphrase it as follows: "Whatever species of weapon the tempter may use against the children of God, whenever and wherever he may come, the protection of the Lord is all-sufficient, and you need not seek for any other. As a general, conscious of having a great work to perform, stands with a calm look and firm foot, while the balls whiz past him on the right hand and on the left, saying, I know that the ball which is to touch me is not yet cast; so stands a prophetic believer in danger's hour, conscious that the lightning will go past his head, that the waters will dry up at his feet, and the arrow fall back from his chest, *because the Lord willeth it thus*. Have not men of faith been seen, filled with this confidence, to rush into the ranks of the foe, to struggle through tempest and wave, and to sleep in the midst of those who were infected with the pestilence?" There is a great beauty in the Psalmist's borrowing his figures from pestilence and

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disease. For the singular fact, that fearless confidence is a certain preservative against contagion, explains to us how assurance of faith is a breastplate in the hour of danger, from which the poisoned arrow must fall back. The arrow that flieth by noonday may also be explained of the Simoom, or the sun-stroke, as the cause of disease and death.

V. 9—13. The believer's repeated confession that God is his sole refuge, is again responded to by the most consoling promise. No evil shall befall them. Their path through life lies across many stones and rocks, but they shall not stumble, for invisible hands carry them—guardian angels surround them. Hostile and destructive powers of nature cannot prevail against them. (Luke x. 19.) Satan cited this beautiful and rich promise in support of his futile effort to tempt our Lord to the display of a vain act of prowess. (Matt. iv. 6.) This promise may be said to have been made with a special reference to Christ, not because Satan applies it to him, but because that oneness with God, which is assured that particular prayers will be granted and particular works will prosper, received in no instance a greater exemplification than in his. Satan, however, misapplied the promise, for it is said, "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee *in all thy ways*," which, however, applies only to *ways traced out by God*—to the ways of duty and vocation. The tempter limited our Lord to a work of selfish vanity, and God is not a servant to sin.

V. 14—16. God himself appears for the purpose of making a still more profound impression of that rich consolation, and of confirming the faith of his servants—"He sets his love upon me—knows my name—calls upon me;" these are the characteristics of believing godliness; the Lord will draw nigh to those who thus draw nigh to him. (James iv. 8.) Long life being mentioned among the promised goods, corresponds to the character of the old covenant, which referred a sensuous people to temporal reward. (Deut. v. 16.) We have already observed, *e. g.* Psalm xxxvii. 9, that the Divinely-inspired Psalmist had more spiritual conceptions of those passages which the common Israelites took in a literal sense. The Psalmist may, therefore, at the time when he was composing this sublime psalm, have had the presentiment of something more than the extension of temporal existence in speaking of long life. So the apostles employed the terms *death* and *life*, *light* and *darkness*, *peace* and *righteousness*, and others with which they were familiar from the Old Testament, in a far more profound sense.

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PSALM XCII.

Songs accompanied with music used to be sung on Sabbaths as well as on other festive occasions. Several songs seem to be strung together in this portion of the Psalms.* This one celebrates the righteousness of the Divine government of the world, as it is praised in many others, especially Psalm xxxvii.

1 A PSALM *or* Song for the Sabbath day.
2 *It is a precious thing* to give thanks unto the LORD,
And to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High:
3 To show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning,
And thy faithfulness every night,
4 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery;
Upon the harp with a solemn sound.
5 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work:
I will triumph in the works of thy hands.
6 O LORD, how great are thy works!
And thy thoughts are very deep.
7 And brutish man knoweth not;
Neither doth a fool understand this.
8 When the wicked spring as the grass,
And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish;
It is that they shall be destroyed for ever.
9 But thou, LORD, *art Most* High for evermore.
10 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD,
For, lo, thine enemies shall perish;
All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.
11 But my horn shall thou exalt like *the horn of* an unicorn
(or, "buffalo";)
I shall be anointed with fresh oil.
12 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies,
And mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that
rise up against me.
13 The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree:
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

* Psalms xcv. xcvi. xcvii. xcviii. xcix. c. These songs have a certain affinity of language, *e. g.* the anadiplosis xcii. 10; xciv. 8; xcvi. 13; the repetition of the phrase xciii. 1, in xcvi. 10, the עֵל־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים Psalms xcv. 3; xcvi. 4; xcvii. 9.

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14 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
15 They shall bring forth fruit in old age;
They shall be fat and flourishing;
16 To show that the LORD *is* upright:
He is my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in him.

V. 2—5. Here is the expression of a mind which regards the service of God, and song in particular, not only as a duty, but as a real delight. The works and doings of the Lord incite such songs. The Psalmist's theme at first embraces all the works and doings of God in nature and in the history of man, but he soon confines himself to the latter.

V. 6—9. His faith assures him that it is a holy God who rules the world; on that account he admires and adores, when he cannot thoroughly understand. Proud sages, whom he, however, calls fools, begin to doubt the depth of *the thoughts of God*, when they are unable to understand them. Humble faith, however, complains of the weakness of human knowledge, and sees itself called upon to admire the more. Our admiration of the Divine government of the world is more matter of faith than of experience; so the Psalmist points to what is concealed behind appearances. "The workers of iniquity do flourish, but it is that they shall be destroyed for ever, and that thou, Lord, art Most High for evermore."

V. 10—12. Assured of the triumph of the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of the world in the aggregate, and *his* enemies being those of the *Lord*, he gives expression to the hope of triumph with regard to himself. The *horn* is a symbol of strength, *vide* Psalm lxxxix. 18.

V. 13—16. The certainty of the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God causes his mind to overflow with the description of the eternal youth of those who derive their strength from the Lord. The palm-tree remains green all the year round, in the cold of winter no less than in the heat of summer:* the age of the cedar is counted not by years but by centuries. This is a figure of those who are planted in the courts of the Lord, and derive the sap of their life from the house of God: it is clear that the house of God denotes communion with God in general. (*Vide* ad. Psalm xxiii. 6; lii. 10.) Even in old age, though every other mental power should have vanished, they shall be strong and fresh while proclaiming that the Lord is upright. Experience instructs us that

* The open country moreover wears a sad aspect now: the soil is rent and dissolves into dust at every breath of wind; the green of the meadows is almost entirely gone—the *palm-tree* alone preserves in the drought and heat its verdant roof of leaves."—*Schubert's Journey to the East*, vol. ii. p. 138.

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pious old men are the most powerful and efficient witnesses and preachers to younger generations; in whom piety bears the sweetest fruit the nearer they are to their grave—while their physical strength and their knowledge succumb to the infirmity attendant upon old age.

PSALM XCIII.

A SONG of praise, celebrating the glory of the Divine government.

1 THE LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty;
The LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself:
The world also is established, that it cannot be moved.*
2 Thy throne *is* established of old:
Thou *art* from everlasting.
3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice:
The floods raise their waves.
4 Mightier than the noise of many waters
Are the waves of the sea:
But mightier *still*
Is the Lord on high.
5 Thy testimonies are very sure:
Holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

V. 1—4. Adornment and honour grace earthly potentates as the expressions of the majesty of their vocation; but all their adornment and glory as well as their vocation are the gifts of Divine grace; therefore not one of them can be compared with God for adornment and glory. He has established the world, the separate lands of which are ruled by the kings of the earth; behold in this the proof of his might. Giving existence to all, he himself received it from none. Self-existence is his eternal property. Behold in this the proof of his majesty. The billows of the tempests rise high as if intent upon splashing against the clouds: their howling is terrific. But greater by far is the Lord on high: none of the waves can overthrow his throne, which from eternity he has established in the heavens. (Ps. xlvi. 4; lxv. 8.)

* One feels almost tempted to translate with some of the old interpreters, "The world also shall be firmly established;" but cf. ad. Psalm xcvi. 10; civ. 5.

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V. 5. If reverence be due to the words of a transitory king of the earth, how much more is it so to the words of the King of kings! The Psalmist prostrates himself reverentially before it as before the words of the Highest Majesty, and regards with reverence the earthly place where that majesty is revealed.

PSALM XCIV.

A PSALM of prayer, sung at times when the heathen poured reproach upon the people of God, and practised injustice in the land.

The Psalmist invokes the Judge of the earth not to defer the punishment of the proud, (v. 1—3.) He describes the arrogant bearing of the wicked (v. 4—7,) and reproves the folly of idolatry, which will not believe in an omniscient God, (v. 8—11.) The instruction of God is the comfort of the pious in the day of adversity, (v. 12—15.) The Psalmist confesses that without the assistance and consolation of the Lord he should never have been able to stand, (v. 16—19.) Though the Lord may seem to have fellowship with wrong, yet shall the faith of the pious be never put to shame, (v. 20—23.)

1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth;
O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shine forth.
2 Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth:
Render a reward to the proud.
3 LORD, how long shall the wicked,
How long shall the wicked triumph?
4 *How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard things?
And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?
5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD,
And afflict thine heritage.
6 They slay the widow and the stranger,
And murder the fatherless.
7 Yet they say, "The LORD shall not see,
Neither shall the God of Jacob regard it."
8 Understand, ye brutish among the people:
And *ye* fools, when will ye be wise?

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9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?
He that formed the eye, shall he not see?*
10 He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?
He that teacheth man what he knoweth.
11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man,
That they *are* vanity.
12 Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD,
And teachest him out of thy law;
13 To give him rest from the days of adversity,
Until the pit be digged for the wicked.
14 For the LORD will not cast off his people,
Neither will he forsake his inheritance.
15 BUT JUDGMENT SHALL RETURN UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS:†
AND ALL THE UPRIGHT IN HEART SHALL FOLLOW IT.
16 Who will rise up for me against the evil doers?
Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?
17 Unless the LORD *had been* my help,
My soul had almost dwelt in silence.
18 When I say, My foot slippeth;
Thy mercy, O LORD, upholdeth me.
19 In the multitude of my troubles within me
Thy comforts delight my soul.
20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee,
Which frameth mischief against the law?
21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous,
And condemn the innocent blood.
22 But the LORD is my defence;
And my God *is* the rock of my refuge.
23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity,
And shall cut them off by their own wickedness;
Yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

V. 15. The intrinsic power of truth, the consciousness of which is manifested in the words of this verse, has at all times given rise to the hope of an ultimate conversion and restoration of the world. The expression of the Psalmist seems to confirm it, though he confines himself to saying that "all the *upright* in heart shall follow it." It seems that evil is accompanied by the spell of delusion, so

* Herder says, "Is it possible to address more pointedly our modern philosophers, who deny *design* in nature? The heathen predicated of their idols what they attribute to their dead, abstract *nature:*" that which the prophets say against the former applies equally to the latter.

† Luther renders, "Right must remain right."

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that the eye, though created for the perception of truth, is unable to discern the intrinsic power of the truth.

V. 20. The throne of iniquity is to be explained of the throne of a hostile pagan power uniting enmity against the law of God with their hostility against his people. So Psalm cxxv. 3, speaks of the "rod of the wicked," or "of wickedness."

PSALM XCV.

A BEAUTIFUL festive psalm. (Cf. Psalm c.) The Roman and Anglican Churches use it, especially verse 6, as an introduction of their services.

Exhortation to the joyous praise of God, (v. 1, 2.) He is more worthy of praise than all other objects of adoration, (v. 4, 5.) Israel above all must praise him, for he has made them his people, and led them as a faithful shepherd. O that they would anew give ear to his voice on the day consecrated to his service, (v. 6, 7,) and be admonished by the conduct of their ancestors, who after so many benefits yet hardened their hearts, and were on that account excluded from the rest of God.

First Choir.

1 O COME, let us sing unto the LORD:
Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
And make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.
3 For the LORD *is* a great God,
And a great King above all gods.
4 In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth:*
The height of the hills *is* his also.
5 The sea *is* his, and he made it.
And his hands formed the dry *land*.
6 O come, let us worship and bow down:
Let us kneel before the LORD our maker.
7 For he *is* our God;
And we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.
O that ye would hear his voice to-day!

* Or, "What the earth conceals."

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Second Choir.

8 Harden not your heart, as in the contention
And as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:
9 When your fathers tempted me,
Proved me, though they saw my work.
10 Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation,
And said, "It *is* a people that do err in their heart,
And they would not know my ways."
11 Unto whom I sware in my wrath
That they should not enter into my rest.

V. 1—5. Holy joy in God, not discord and dejection, appears here in the old covenant as the fundamental sentiment of adoration. God, who effects "the salvation" of his people, has a thousand claims upon "their gratitude." There is no need of eloquence in man to exalt him, for his works speak aloud and furnish infinite matter for songs of praise.

V. 6, 7. Every emotion of the heart seeks for an adequate expression. Hence the Psalmist is not satisfied with asking for devotional feelings, but prays for the work of adoration and humiliation, by bowing down and kneeling. He praises chiefly that work of the Lord which deserved special consideration when Israel assembled for purposes of worship. He is "the Lord our maker," or as Moses has it, "the Rock that begat thee, the God that formed thee." (Deut. xxxii. 18.) He found Israel as a troop of slaves, who were no people. He gave them the law, guided and fed them as a shepherd, (*vide* ad. Ps. xxxiii. 1,) his faithful hand holding the staff. They had often been faithless, but the "*To-day*" for ever resounds anew, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Rom. xi. 29.)

V. 8—11. Lest the people should regard the admonition needless, God himself appears, reminding them of the faithlessness of their ancestors, (Exod. xvii.) and its serious consequences. As it is no easy thing firmly to believe in the love of our invisible Father high above the clouds, so will this Father assuredly be lenient towards the weakness of men. As regards his people he had showed himself to them, become visible, and appeared, as it were, before them in his miracles; but in spite of all this they provoked him anew in the wilderness, by asking, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exod. xvii. 7.) Their unbelief was by no means a transient weakness. The Lord had to bear its effusions for forty years. It then became manifest that they were not worthy to enter into the rest which he had prepared for them in Canaan; besides Caleb and Joshua, not one of their six hundred thousand men entered there. This passage is beautifully explained Hebrews iv. 7, *etc.* Since

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God addressed the same admonition to later generations, the apostle concludes that the rest which God had prepared for the people in the earthly Canaan was not the right one; that there was another rest, from which men might exclude themselves through unbelief.

PSALM XCVI.

ALTHOUGH Psalms xcvi.—c. make no specific mention of the Messiah, they are nevertheless (Psalm xcix. excepted) Messianic, because they set forth his work and repeat the frequent declarations of the prophets. They show how the messages of the prophets entered into the hearts of pious Israelites, inspired them, and how the lyric poets familiarized the people more with their contents, from the fact of their forming part of the temple service. The theme of these psalms is the Messiah's advent on earth, for the purpose of establishing a kingdom of righteousness, of holding a judgment in which idols shall be demolished, the only true God receive universal homage, (Ps. xcvii. 7,) and the God of Israel be preached over the whole earth. With this accord the predictions of the prophets, and Isaiah attunes a song similar to this, "Sing unto the Lord a new song," *etc.* (Isa. xlii. 10.) According to 1 Chronicles xvi. this psalm in conjunction with some verses of Psalms cv. and cvi. was sung at the removal of the ark into the sanctuary. Kindred in contents are especially Psalms xlvii. and lxvii.

The Lord shall be praised in all the earth and at all times, (v. 1—3.) He is worthy: all other gods are nothing, (v. 4—6.) All the heathen must worship him in holy reverence, (v. 7—9.) The proclamation of the Lord's monarchy is an object of joy so great that even inanimate nature is forced to utter her voice and to praise the Lord, (v. 10—13.)

1 O SING unto the LORD a new song:
Sing unto the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name;
Preach his salvation from day to day.
3 Declare his glory among the heathen,
His wonders among all people.
4 For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised:
He *is* to be feared above all gods.

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5 For all the gods of the nations *are* idols:*
But the LORD made the heavens.
6 Honour and majesty *are* before him:
Strength and beauty *are* in his sanctuary.
7 Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
8 Give unto the LORD the glory *due unto* his name;
Bring an offering, and come into his courts.
9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness:
Fear before him, all the earth.
10 Say among the heathen *that* the LORD reigneth:
The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved:
He shall judge the people righteously.
11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof (or, "all that *is* therein.")
12 Let the field be joyful and all that *is* therein:
And let all the trees of the wood rejoice
13 Before the LORD: for he cometh,
For he cometh to judge the earth:
He shall judge† the world with righteousness,
And the people with his truth.

V. 1—6. Songs of praise shall be addressed unto the Lord with renewed faith and renewed love, not only by his people but by the whole earth, not only now and then, but from day to day. The knowledge of this God is to reach all the nations from the narrow borders of a country the greatest extension of which, from Sidon to Sodom, comprised not more than about 130 miles: the words of the prophet shall be fulfilled, "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. iii. 9.) It was incredible to men, but the Lord had imparted that assurance to the hearts of his elect. "All the gods of the nations are idols." The proper meaning of idol is "a vanity"—"a nothing," (1 Cor. viii. 4;) they demand adoration without having done any works. "But the Lord made the heavens." Though glorious on earth, the fulness of his glory is in his heavenly sanctuary.

V. 7—9. It is proper that the nations should approach such a God with praises and offerings in the festal adornment of priests. (Cf. Psalm xxix. 2.)

* Literally, "are nothings," *i. e.* fancies of the mind.
† Or, "rule."

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V. 10—13. He who is the sole king of creation made and established the world in so solid a manner that it cannot be moved, though generations of rebels seek to scatter into it universal confusion. He judges the nations in righteousness: believers are sure of this, and shall see it when he shall establish his visible kingdom. It will not be a reign of terror, but to all who obey his laws a reign of joy, and of joy so great, that inanimate nature herself shall participate in "the glorious liberty of the children of God," (Rom. viii 21,) and give loud utterance to her rejoicing.

PSALM XCVII.

THIS description of the advent of the Lord as the Judge of the earth is similar to Psalm xviii. The Psalmist confines himself, however, not to judgment in its literal sense, but comprises in that term every divine energy which brings about the cessation of evil. In the same way our Lord says, "The prince of this world is judged." (John xvi. 11.) This is evident, for the conversion of idolaters to the living God is stated as a result of that judgment, (v. 7.) So Malachi (Mal. iii. 2, 3,) names as one result of the Divine judgment the purifying and sanctifying of the priesthood of Israel. We who behold in history the partial manifestation at least of the Psalmist's vision, are entitled to the assertion that "the theme of this Psalm is *the triumph of Christ over an unbelieving world in its present partial fulfilment and ultimate completion.*"

1 THE LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice;
Let the multitude of isles be glad *thereof.*
2 Clouds and darkness *are* round about him:
Righteousness and judgment *are* the foundation of his throne.
3 A fire goeth before him,
And burneth up his enemies round about.
4 His lightnings enlightened the world:
The earth saw and trembled.
5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
6 The heavens declare his righteousness,
And all the people see his glory.

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7 Confounded be all they that serve graven images,
That boast themselves of idols:
Worship him, all *ye* gods!
8 Zion heard, and was glad;
And the daughters of Judah rejoiced
Because of thy judgments, O LORD.
9 For thou LORD, *art* Most High in all the earth;
Thou art greatly exalted above all gods.
10 Ye that love the LORD, hate evil:
He preserveth the souls of his saints;
He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.
11 Light is sown for the righteous,*
And gladness for the upright in heart.
12 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous;
And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

V. 1—6. "The Lord reigneth." He reigns now, though his longsuffering bears with his adversaries. This is not a fearful but a comforting truth: the source of rejoicing to all who love the good, even to remote isles that shall hereafter gratefully acknowledge it. (Isa. xlii. 4. 10.) Dark clouds enwrap his throne. This is meant to symbolize the severity of the judge; but there is every reason for courage, since righteousness and judgment are the foundations of the throne. The fire of his anger consumes his adversaries. Though now it often seems as if he had laid his sceptre for a while aside, it shall then become manifest that he is "the Lord of the whole earth." As far as the heavens extend, so far shall his righteousness be made known. The term righteousness must not be confined to retributive justice, but extended to all the attributes which come into play in the revelation of his *Being*, among which is included that of "goodness." (*See* ad. Ps. v. 9.) This is the reason why the latter half of the verse speaks of his "*glory*."

V. 7—9. Vain pretenders to divine dignity shall then come to nought, and great exulting shall be in the city of God, when the Lord shall be *revealed*, such as he is now, though unacknowledged, "Exalted far above all gods."

V. 10—12. They only who hate evil, as does the king, are owned as citizens in the city of God. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. ii. 19.) They may safely trust in the immutability of the divine law, according to which joy and gladness shall ultimately arise to the pious, and on that account cannot but praise him for evermore.

* Or, "Light shall arise to the righteous."

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PSALM XCVIII.

THIS psalm is the echo of Psalm xcvi. Its contents are, the final great revelation, the ultimate triumph of God, when his salvation and his righteousness, the revelation of which is promised to Israel, shall be revealed to his own people and to the whole world.

A PSALM.

1 O sing unto the LORD a new song;
For he hath done marvellous things:
His right hand, and his holy arm,
Hath gotten him the victory.
2 The LORD hath caused his salvation to be made known,
His righteousness hath he revealed before the heathen.
3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth
Toward the house of Israel:
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth:
Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.
5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp;
With the harp, and the voice of a psalm.
6 With trumpets and sound of cornet
Make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.
7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.
8 Let the floods clap *their* hands:
Let the hills be joyful together
9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth:
With righteousness shall he judge the world,
And the people with equity.

PSALM XCIX.

A HORTATORY psalm, which calls upon Israel to worship their God and King, who reigns in righteousness, and has shown much favour to his people.

First Choir.

1 THE LORD reigneth—let the people tremble:
He that sitteth *between* the cherubim—let the earth be moved.

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2 The LORD *is* great in Zion;
And he *is* high above all the people.
3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name;
For it *is* holy.
4 And the strength of the king who loveth judgment!
Thou dost establish equity.
Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

Second Choir.

5 Exalt ye the LORD our God,
And worship at his footstool;
For he *is* holy.

First Choir.

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests,
And Samuel among them that call upon his name;
They called upon the LORD, and he answered them.
7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar:
They kept his testimonies,
And the ordinance *that* he gave them.
8 Thou answerest them, O LORD, our God!
Thou wast a God that forgavest them (the people,)
Though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

Second Choir.

9 Exalt the LORD our God,
And worship at his holy hill;
For the LORD our God *is* holy.

V. 1—5. The Lord is a mighty King: at the revelation of his power everything must tremble. For centuries he has exercised judgment in Israel, therefore Israel above all nations shall worship him. They shall worship at his footstool, *i. e.* near the ark and in the temple. (1 Chron. xxviii. 2; Psalm cxxxii. 7; Isaiah lx. 13; Lam. ii. 1; Ezek. xliii. 7.) This expression is to indicate, that however marvellous the revelation of God in his visble sanctuary may appear, its glory is not to be compared with the sanctuary of heaven, in which all his fulness is expanded.

V. 6—9. God had in his mercy favoured his people with mighty intercessors, such as Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, the two former of whom are here as the celebrated representatives and intercessors of their nation called *priests*, though Moses was not a priest. (Exod. xxxii. 31, 32; Psalm cvi. 23; 1 Sam. xii. 19; Jer. xv. 1.) He had revealed his mercy in drawing nigh unto his people. He had punished their transgressions, but his method

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was lenient, (2 Sam. vii. 14:) he had not removed his favour from them, but forgave them for their intercessors' sake. Shall Israel forget this?

PSALM C.

A TEMPLE song, as Psalm xcv., which was probably sung during the march of a procession. (Cf. v. 4; Ps. cxviii. 19.) The refreshing words of verse 5 seem to have been frequently repeated in these songs: this seems to be the legitimate inference from Ezra iii. 11; 1 Macc. iv. 24; 1 Chron. xvi. 34. They occur also in Psalms cvi. cvii. cxviii. cxxxvi. and in psalms whose date falls after the captivity.

1 A PSALM of Praise.
Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth.
2 Serve the LORD with gladness:
Come before his presence with singing!
3 Know ye that the LORD he *is* God:
It is he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves,
To be his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise:
Be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name,
5 For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting;
And his truth *endureth* to all generations.

PSALM CI.

THIS psalm contains the principles of David's government.* Many commentators think that this psalm was composed during the period of his persecution; but from his calling Jerusalem the city of God, the ark seems already to have been on Mount Zion. If the words in v. 2—"When thou wilt come to me," should refer to the ark, the date of the psalm falls into the period when David, afraid to receive the ark, but hearing of the blessing it brought upon the

* "It may easily be seen that the poet is a mighty potentate, and David, for the nobility of David's mind is throughout discernible."—*Ewald.*

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house of Obed-edom, intended to remove it from there to the capital, and offered new vows to his God on that occasion.

He will sing of the chief virtues of royal government, which he intends to cultivate. He begins with his private life, (v. 1, 2.) Slanderous and proud servants shall be kept from his court, (v. 3—5,) but he will attract faithful servants, and purify the city of God from transgressors, (v. 6—8.) This psalm is one of the few (viz. cxxvii. cxxviii.) which refer to the administration of a secular calling. Luther observes, "This psalm is written against factious men, who pretend to much holiness in condemning domesticity, matrimony, and anything that is high and low on earth."

1 A PSALM of David.
I will sing of mercy and judgment:
Unto thee, O LORD, will I sing (or "play.")
2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.
When thou wilt come unto me.
I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.
3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes:
I hate the work of them that turn aside;
It shall not cleave to me.
4 A froward heart shall depart from me:
I will not know a wicked *person*.
5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off:
Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.
6 Mine eyes *look* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me:
He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.
7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house:
He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.
8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land:
That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

V. 1, 2. Mercy and judgment, the chief qualities of a king's government, form the theme of his song. He calls it a song of praise, because holiness prompts him to such resolutions. We refer the words, "When thou wilt come unto me,"* to the ark,

* Interpreters are greatly at variance as to the meaning of this passage. Luther renders, "Before them that belong unto me:" adding, Some Rabbis will no doubt find fault with my free rendering, but I prefer plain sense to their ambiguous words." David's meaning is, "Those who enter my house, *i. e.* belong to me." Aben Ezra, Kimchi, refer to a coming of the

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the object of his longing, which he brought up with rejoicing, and before which he danced in the gladness of his heart. (2 Sam. vi.) Its arrival on Zion made that day a day of new and holy resolves, as we are wont to turn over a new leaf on experiencing unexpectedly the goodness of the Lord. Everything should be holy in the city which was henceforth to contain the visible sanctuary of his God. He would especially be holy within his house, *i. e.* his family, since the public and private life of kings often presents a strange contrast.

V. 3—7. It is his intention to strive as a ruler after righteousness, to get faithful and godly courtiers around him. He had during his residence at the court of Saul learnt how greatly kings are plagued with sycophants, slanderers, and proud men, like Doeg and Cush, who driving the faithful away, seek only their own gain, and to become the lords of their lords. A prince once observed that he was not afraid of those that are far away, but of those who were following his steps, because these were far more inclined to injure him. David vows in general terms that he will not bear with the wicked; he then expresses his hatred against calumniators and the proud, who had never an eye to the king's, though always to their own interest. He will be on the look out for the faithful of the land, whereby he intimates that they are by no means numerous. Duke Frederic once said, "The older I get the less I know whom to trust." A prince should not get weary of seeking, for it is worth the trouble. Even in regarding a country which is governed by a Nero or a Caracalla, it may still be said that their righteous servants prevented more evil than they themselves did. David detests lying as much as slander, for he himself is honest and loves the truth. The temptation to untruth and flattery in the case of servants and confidential attendants of great lords is confessedly most common. It must be very common, since there are but few princes who so thoroughly loathe it as David did, and since many are not even as wise as that abbot who said of the brethren who made the most reverential bow, "I know that they do not look at *me*, but at the key which is fastened to my girdle."

V. 8. The purifying of his immediate circle of attendants is

spirit of prophecy; and the majority of modern translators regard the words as a longing sigh for Divine assistance, "When wilt thou come unto me with thine aid?" But how can the simple "come unto me" mean the assistance of God? How strange such a sigh? Theodoret regards the passage as a question, but as a question of surprise why God did not enter into a heart which was already entirely devoted to him? Münster, Bucer, Calvin, Grotius, who refer the date of the psalm to before the ascension of David, render, "When wilt thou raise me to the throne?" or, "When thou shalt raise me to the throne." Still different from the rest is *Rudinger*, "Whenever thou wilt come to me," *i. e.* "When I am with mine;" and *Tremellius*, "When thou shalt come to call me to account." *Maurer*, "When shall I be prosperous?" *Jarchi*, "Until the right way shall come unto me." Our explanation may be seen in *Calmet* and *Venema*.

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only the beginning for the purifying of the whole land. The unholy city, which now contains the sanctuary of the Lord, shall be holy to the Lord. David purposes to attack sin of any kind wherever it might appear. Sensible that such a work cannot be done at once, he vows to renew his resolve from day to day, and with new strength to enter upon the work.

PSALM CII.

THE inscription denotes the object of the psalm. It is a psalm for the afflicted. It was written, as appears from verses 14—18, during the exile, after it had lasted for some considerable time, and the seventy years which the prophets had stated as its duration had almost expired, (v. 14.)

Remote from his native country, exposed to the reproach of enemies—the Psalmist's life is slowly advancing, (v. 1—12.) But the time of deliverance is at hand. The Spirit assures him that the Lord will soon rebuild Zion, and that the kings of the heathen shall hereafter be converted to the Lord, who does such mighty works, (v. 13—23.) This elevation of mind is succeeded by gloom —the voice of complaint is heard once more—but only for a moment, for he is raised again by looking to the Eternal, whose omnipotence is unchangeable, and who will show his salvation to his posterity at least, if not to himself.

1 A PRAYER of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed,
and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.
2 Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And let my cry come unto thee.
3 Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble;
Incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call
Answer me speedily.
4 For my days are consumed like smoke,
And my bones are burned as an hearth (or, "faggots.")
5 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass;
So that I forget to eat my bread.
6 By reason of the voice of my groaning
My bones cleave to my flesh.
7 I am like a pelican of the wilderness:
I am like an owl in ruins.
8 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.

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9 Mine enemies reproach me all the day;
And they that are mad against me are sworn against me.
10 For I have eaten ashes like bread,
And mingled my drink with weeping,
11 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath:
For thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.
12 My days *are* like a shadow that declineth;*
And I am withered like grass.
13 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever;
And thy remembrance unto all generations.
14 Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion:
For the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.
15 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones,
And have mercy upon† the dust thereof.
16 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD,
And all the kings of the earth thy glory.
17 When the LORD shall build up Zion,
He shall appear in his glory.
18 He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
And not despise their prayer.
19 This shall be written for the generation to come:
And the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.
20 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;
From heaven did the LORD behold the earth;
21 To hear the groaning of the prisoner;
To loose those that are appointed to death;
22 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion,
And his praise in Jerusalem;
23 When the people are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD,
24 He weakened my strength in the way,
He shortened my days.
25 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days:
Thy years *are* throughout all generations.
26 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:
And the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.
27 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure:
Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;
As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

* Or, "Like an extended (*i. e.* stretched out) shadow."
† *I. e.* "are grieved at."

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28 But thou *art* the same,
And thy years shall have no end.
29 The children of thy servants shall continue,
And their seed shall be established before thee.

V. 2—5. He begins to call upon God with the fervour of one who is sure that his prayer reaches to heaven. The glow of these complaints shows that the wailing is not only personal, but refers, like the lamentations of Jeremiah, to the humiliation of a people which was formerly highly honoured before God and men and to whom the Psalmist belongs. The debasement of his nation has struck the deepest wounds into the heart of this Psalmist as it did to Jeremiah—though both solely grieve on account of the sin which had occasioned such chastisements. (Lam. i. 8. 18; ii. 14, *etc.*) His days pass on like the extended evening shadow; flames rage within, his heart is withered, he loathes to eat, and his flesh is faint; like a bird of the desert, like a lone sparrow deprived of his consort, he seeks in his pain for solitude.

V. 13—18. The Lord may have changed his *dealings* with Israel—but his *Being* remains eternally the same. He had caused it to be proclaimed that the captivity should come to an end after a certain term. "I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." (Jer. xxx. 11.) "As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity: The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks." (Jer. xxxi. 23, 24.) The *term* of the chastisement had even been revealed, "These nations shall serve the king of Babylon *seventy* years." (Jer. xxv. 11; cf. Zech. i. 12; Dan. ix. 2.) The complainant's hope has in these declarations something to seize, by means of which he mounts to so joyous an assurance, that he proclaims the building of Jerusalem, and looks forward to a time when the kings of the heathen shall fear the God of Israel.

V. 19—23. As the history of the Lord's people is a sermon—so is especially the history of *this* deliverance. For mercy rebuilds Zion—the praise of the Lord shall be on the lips of its new inhabitants, so that they shall be the evangelists of the true God, at the time when the Lord shall add the heathen nations to the people of God. (Psalm xlvii. 10.)

V. 24—29. The prospects of the future are thus glorious and bright; but shall the Psalmist be spared to see it? He feels that his strength is gone. Yet however much things in heaven and on earth may change, the Being of the Lord remains unchanged.

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Heaven and earth are his handiwork, with which he as it were surrounds himself as with a vesture. The vesture may change, but he, whom it surrounds, endureth for ever. He may linger with revealing himself in the present, but the children of his servants shall experience his blessings.

PSALM CIII.

A PSALM of praise, no less expressive of the peace of a soul reconciled to God than Psalm xxiii. Psalms like the present show that the evangelical spirit of the New Testament came occasionally upon the servants of God, who lived under the Old Covenant.

It is the Psalmist's intention to praise the Lord for the benefits which he had himself experienced, among which he regards *the forgiveness of sins* as the greatest, (v. 1—5.) He then praises the benefits which Israel had experienced in conjunction with the forgiving mercy of the Lord, (v. 7—19.) The soul of the Psalmist is so filled with the necessity to praise the Lord—a want than which none more noble can be conceived—that he calls upon all the creatures of God to praise him, (v. 20—22.)

A PSALM of David.

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul:
And all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits.
3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;
5 Who satisfieth thy mouth* with good *things;*
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.
6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment
For all that are oppressed.
7 He made known his ways unto Moses,
His acts unto the children of Israel.

* "Thine age?" Thol. de Wette. "Thy desire." LXX. Vulg.

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8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
9 He will not always chide:
Neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.
10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
11 For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.
12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children,
So the LORD pitieth them that fear him.
14 For he knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we *are* dust.
15 *As for* man, his days *are* as grass:
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;
And it shall know no more the place thereof.
17 But the mercy of the Lord *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children;
18 To such as keep his covenant,
And to those that remember his commandments to do them.
19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens;
And his kingdom ruleth over all.
20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels,
That excel in strength, that do his commandments,
Hearkening unto the voice of his word.
21 Bless ye the LORD, all *ye* his hosts;
Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure.
22 Bless the LORD, all his works,
In all places of his dominion:
Bless the Lord, O my soul.

V. 1—5. The Psalmist reproves as it were the remissness and indolence of the human heart to praise the Lord, and repeatedly calls upon his soul to engage in that occupation. He confesses that enough of goodness has been shown to him, and that man chiefly requires a *good memory* for the benefits of God. He begins not like others with the enumeration of temporal benefits, such as health, wife, offspring, and the like, however much they ought to be gratefully acknowledged; but above all he thanks the Lord for the *forgiveness of his sins*. In mentioning *diseases* he alludes to

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the *noxiousness* of sin, and in naming *destruction* his reference is to the *punishment* due to sin, which the grace and mercy of God averts. The fountain of Divine mercy for his people is so copious, that they shall remain ever young, and that their leaves shall not wither, (Psalm i.) Similar in import is the figure of the eagle, who attains to the highest age among birds, and as they moult annually, may be said to renew themselves and to get young again. (Isaiah xl. 31; lxv. 20.) The glory of the old age of the godly consists in this, that while the faculties for sensuous no less than mental enjoyment gradually decline, and the hearth of life gets thus deprived of its fuel, the blessings of godliness not only continue to refresh the soul in old age, but are not until then most thoroughly enjoyed. The sun of piety rises the warmer in proportion as the sun of life declines.

V. 6—18. The Psalmist looks now from himself to his nation and her experience of Divine deliverance, especially in the days of her youth at the time of the great deliverance by Moses. No merit gave them a title, but the mercy and grace of God were the only sources of that blessing. He punished them in his anger but "in measure." (Jer. xxx. 11; Isaiah liv. 8.) However much he punishes, his punishment does not come up to our iniquities; the psalmist here alludes to the beautifully evangelical name of God. (Exod. xxxiv. 6.) High as the heaven is above the earth, is his mercy over his servants, and he removes the recollection of their transgressions as far as the east is from the west. The Psalmist twice adds "those that fear him," and then, "to such as keep his covenant." In doing so, he repels that carnal view of Divine love, which forgets that faith and repentance are the conditions on which the Lord promises to become our father. David often felt this filial relation to God. (Psalms xvi. xxiii. xxxii.) He confesses that the mercy of God is a pure act of grace: he is merciful because we are nothing and are only strong in him. Man is as frail as the flower of the field, which after the scorching east wind has passed over it for a day or two, dies and others grow up in its stead. What can man do without God? Just those who know these things and make him their refuge, experience his mercy and overflowing goodness, which are extended to their posterity, provided they do not render themselves unworthy of them. The added condition of verse 18 shows the misapprehension of those who think that the promise of the blessings on godly parents unto the thousandth generation, (Exod. xx. 5, 6.) might be so interpreted that hardened offspring could enjoy the favour of God for their father's sake, while pious offspring could for their father's sake be rejected. It is clear that this was not the meaning of Moses, for it is said of the wicked "unto the third and fourth generation of them *that hate me*," while it is said of the godly, "showing mercy unto thousands of them

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*that love me and keep my commandments.** After this representation of the adorable attributes of the Lord, he concludes the description with the truth that his throne is established in the heavens, high above the fluctuations of earthly life, and that all, willingly or unwillingly, must serve him.

V. 20—22. These thoughts have so edified the pious Psalmist that his own praise and that of men seems insufficient to him; he calls therefore heavenly spirits to his aid, the servants of might, forming as it were the Lord's army, as well as all creatures that form part of his infinite dominion. But he finally reverts to his own soul, lest engaged with calling upon others he should neglect his own duty.

PSALM CIV.

A GLORIOUS psalm of nature. It begins with a description of the habitation of God and of his ministering powers, (v. 2—4.) Adverting to the beginning of creation there follows a description of the origin of the habitable globe, (v. 5—9,) of God's care for the wild beasts in the loneliness of the forest, for cattle, for man who had received more than he needed, for the vegetable kingdom, the birds in the top of the trees, and for the occupants of the loftiest mountainous regions, (v. 10—18.) He turns to the stars of heaven, the wonderful alternations of day and night and attendant spectacles, (v. 19—23,) and proceeds to the miracles of the deep, (v. 24—26;) though the creatures of God are innumerable yet not one of them is uncared for: shall he not provide food, who gives life? (v. 27—30.) His glory is not transient, (v. 31, 32.) Who can regard such a God without praising him and desiring the return of all those who have forsaken him? (v. 33—35.)

1 BLESS the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, thou art very great:
Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.
2 Who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment:
Who stretchest out the heavens like a tent:
3 Who layeth his upper chambers above the waters:†
Who maketh the clouds his chariot:
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

* Cf. Deut. xxiv. 16; Lev. xxvi. 39; Jer. xxxi. 29, 30; Ezek. xviii.—*Hengstenberg's Authenticity of the Pentateuch*, ii. 544.

† This is a better rendering than "of waters," for the sensuous idea of man conceives of God as enthroned *above* the clouds, in the luminous heights which spread away into infinity. Cf. Psalm cxlviii. 4, where the clouds are the waters above the skies, beyond which the Lord sits enthroned.

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4 Who maketh the winds his angels (messengers,)
A flaming fire his ministers.
5 *Who* laid the foundations of the earth,
That it should not be removed for ever.
6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as *with* a garment
The waters stood above the mountains.
7 At thy rebuke they fled;
At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away—
8 The mountains rose, the valleys sank down—
Unto the place which thou hast founded for them.
9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over;
That they turn not again to cover the earth.
10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys,
Which flow among the hills.
11 They give drink to every beast of the field:
The wild asses quench their thirst.
12 By them the fowls of the heaven have their habitation,
And sing among the branches.
13 He watereth the hills from his chambers:
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.
14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,
And herb for the service of man:
That he may bring forth food out of the earth;
15 And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man,
To make *his* face to shine more than oil:
And bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart.
16 The trees of the LORD are full *of sap:*
The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;
17 Where the birds make their nests:
As for the stork, the fir trees *are* her house.
18 The high hills *are* a refuge for the wild goats;
And the rocks for the conies.
19 He appointed the moon for seasons:
The sun knoweth his going down.
20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night:
Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep *forth.*
21 The young lions roar after their prey,
And seek their meat from God.
22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together,
And lay them down in their dens.
23 Man goeth forth unto his work
And to his labour until the evening.

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24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all:
The earth is full of thy riches.
25 *So is* this great and wide sea,
Wherein *are* things creeping innumerable,
Both small and great beasts.
26 There go the ships:
There is that leviathan, *whom* thou hast made to play therein.
27 These wait all upon thee;
That thou mayest give *them* their meat in due season.
28 *That* thou givest them they gather:
Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.
29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled:
Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.
30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created;
And thou renewest the face of the earth.
31 The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever:
The LORD shall rejoice in his works.
32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth:
He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.
33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live:
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
34 My speech shall be sweet to him:
I will be glad in the LORD.
35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,
And let the wicked be no more.
Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

V. 1. This call upon his soul to praise the Lord is impressively repeated at the close of the psalm. The works of God give a mirror-like reflection of his being. (Rom. i. 20.) The diversity and extension of creation testify of his glory and majesty.

V. 2—4. The description beginning with the highest heaven gradually descends to the earth and its inhabitants. The vaulted sky is the tent, the light of heaven the garment of God, which conceals him, the invisible one. His upper chamber (people in the East used to retire to the upper chamber when they wished for solitude) is reared up in bright æther on the slender foundation of rainy clouds. (Ps. cxlviii. 4.) Undulating clouds and the wings of the tempest are his royal chariot. The winds and flames of fire,

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hastening from those heights to this lower world, are his ministering spirits.*

V. 5—9. With reference to the history of creation, the Psalmist now turns to the lower regions of earth. The habitation of God in the heavens is firmly established, though the waters be its rafters: nor does the earth sink, though her weight seem to draw her into the deep. The waters covered her in the beginning like a garment to the highest summits of her mountains; the Lord spoke, the waters were gathered into the ocean, and mountains and valleys stood forth. Omnipotence has set a bound to the waters, though they are above and lighter than the earth and seem to overflow it. (*See* ad. Ps. xxiv. 2.)

V. 10—12. There are streams in the lone desert, invisible to man, giving drink to the beast of the field. The wild ass is very shy and dwells in the desert. By their lone banks the birds warble their notes, if not to human ears, to the Creator who made them.

V. 13—15. The waters distil from the mountains for the benefit of man and beast. The cattle, *more* dependent on water and grass than men, for whom the vine grows to gladden their hearts, so that their faces get radiant with joy, and shine as with ointment. (Sir. xxxi. 34; xl. 20.) This passage may be explained as showing that the truly pious need not restrict themselves to the barest necessities of life, but that they who have the means may enjoy the gifts of God. But the words of Sirach are first in consideration, "*Wine and music rejoice the heart, but the love of wisdom is above them both.*" Moreover, that which is lawful is not always expedient, and love prompts sometimes to the denial of what is lawful. (1 Cor. vi. 12.)

V. 16—18. Irrigated from above, the vegetable kingdom blossoms and flourishes. The Psalmist confines himself to the cedar as the queen thereof. Life is diffused up to the top of the loftiest trees and the summit of the highest mountains. A lone butterfly may be seen on the heights of Chimborazo.

V. 19—23. The sun and the moon are, as it were, for the service of our globe: they divide the year into day and night. The night hides life in her lap, and the day brings it forth. The lion roars in the stillness of night, and cries to God for food. When

* The most natural construction recommends the translation, "He maketh his angels winds," (cf. Köster;) it has been remarked (ad. Psalm xxxiv. 8) that the term "angel," literally *message*, or *emanation* from God, does not always denote personal beings, but also the ministering *powers of God* in nature. This would justify that translation, and Psalm cxlvii. 15 may be compared, where it is said, that the *word* of God, being sent out, runneth swiftly. But when light is called the garment, æther the chamber, and clouds the chariot, one cannot help thinking that the elements of nature, *e. g.* the winds, should be called messengers.

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the beasts of the forest retire to their dens, man goes forth to his work.

V. 24—26. Having enumerated only a small portion of the works of God, the Psalmist feels his inability to comprehend them all. His astonishment is his adoration. From the few particulars he had named, he makes the universal conclusion, "In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches." He recollects having passed by the life in the *deep*. The vastness and greatness of the sea alone would suffice to strike us with astonishment, even if it were an uninhabited infinity. But its infinite vastness hides an infinite world: an innumerable diversity of beasts, small and great. Its surface is alive, and there is busy life down to the lowest coral boughs. Its surface carries man, who transplants his arts and his passions from the land to the ocean, and trading and warring, inventing and discovering, animates the waste face of the deep with the spectacles of earth. A race of creatures merrily move in it as their home, and play in its billows.

V. 27—30. According to the judgment of merely sensuous observation, the food which millions of creatures are consuming every moment flows from other sources than the hand of God, and secondary causes too easily conceal the ~~final~~ cause. But the truly God-fearing man looks through every concealment and veiling, and adores the ever-rich God, who has for many thousand years provided the meat "in due season," (*i. e.* when they require it,) for the millions of guests and children on earth, on mountain height, in the air and the ocean, that look to his hand, without his treasury having grown any the poorer during these many thousand years. (Psalm cxlv. 15.) Their *food* cannot come from any other hand than that from which their *life* proceeds. But their life is God's, for by him breathe and live all that are alive; their breath is *his*, and if he takes it away they die; so the whole creation would perish if God were to take away from it what is his.

V. 31, 32. The glory and majesty of God are subject to no change. When he had created the world he said, "Behold, it is very good." Though man did not continue in that goodness, and brought confusion into the world, yet does the Lord rejoice in his works, and will preserve them until they shall have accomplished their ends. He gives the signal and the universe obeys, and at his approach trembles like Sinai in reverential submission. (Exod. xix. 18.)

V. 33—35. It is indeed the most worthy employment of an entire existence to sing the praises of such a God. While the Psalmist says this, and with a sense of joy concludes his prayer, his mind contemplates to how small an extent the Lord is acknowledged. This gives rise to the prayer that the wicked should cease to be in this beautiful earth. (Psalm vii. 10; xxxvii. 38; cxlv. 20.)

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PSALM CV.

A PSALM of praise. Its design is to recommend the faithful preservation of the Divine law by a recital of the Divine leadings of the nation, from the days of Abraham to their entrance into Canaan. The proclamation of the name of the Lord among the heathen is called for in the beginning of the psalm, as in Psalms xcvi. 3; xcviii. 4; c. 1. The first fifteen verses occur in conjunction with Psalm xcvi., in the psalm which was sung at the setting up of the ark, which is mentioned in 1 Chron. xvi. The historical facts of this and the succeeding psalm have partly been explained, ad. Psalm lxxviii.

1 O GIVE thanks unto the LORD;
Call upon his name:
Make known his deeds among the people.
2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him:
Talk ye of all his wondrous works.
3 Glory ye in his holy name:
Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.
4 Seek the LORD and his strength:
Seek his face evermore.
5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done;
His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;
6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant,
Ye children of Jacob his chosen.
7 He, the LORD, *is* our God:
His judgments *are* in all the earth.
8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever,
The word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations.
9 Which *covenant* he made with Abraham,
And his oath unto Isaac;
10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law,
And to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant:
11 Saying, "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,
The lot of your inheritance."
12 When there were *but* a few men in number:
Yea, very few, and strangers in it.
13 When they went from one nation to another,
From *one* kingdom to another people;
14 He suffered no man to do them wrong:
Yea, he reproved kings for their sakes;

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15 *Saying*, "Touch not mine anointed,
And do my prophets no harm."
16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land:
He brake the whole staff of bread.
17 He sent a man before them, *even* Joseph,
Who was sold for a servant:
18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters:
He was laid in iron:
19 Until the time that his word came:
The word of the LORD tried him.
20 The king sent and loosed him;
Even the ruler of the people, and let him go free.
21 He made him lord of his house,
And ruler of all his possessions,
22 To bind his princes at his pleasure;
And teach his senators wisdom.
23 Israel also came into Egypt,
And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
24 And he increased his people greatly;
And made them stronger than their enemies.
25 He turned their heart to hate his people,
To deal subtilly with his servants.
26 He sent Moses his servant,
And Aaron whom he had chosen.
27 They showed his signs among them,
And wonders in the land of Ham.
28 He sent darkness, and made it dark;
And they rebelled not against his word.
29 He turned their waters into blood,
And slew their fish.
30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance,
In the chambers of their kings.
31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies,
And lice in all their coasts.
32 He gave them hail for rain,
And flaming fire in their land.
33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees;
And brake the trees of their coasts.
34 He spake, and the locusts came,
And caterpillars, and that without number,
35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land,
And devoured the fruit of their ground.

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36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land,
The chief of all their strength.
37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold:
And *there* was not one feeble *person* among their tribes.
38 Egypt was glad when they departed:
For the fear of them fell upon them.
39 He spread a cloud for a covering;
And fire to give light in the night.
40 *The people* asked, and he brought quails,
And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out;
They ran in the dry places *like* a river.
42 For he remembered his holy promise,
And Abraham his servant.
43 And he brought forth his people with joy,
And his chosen with gladness:
44 And gave them the lands of the heathen:
And they inherited the labour of the people;
45 That they might observe his statutes,
And keep his laws.
Praise ye the LORD.

V. 11. Cf. Gen. xiii. 17.

V. 15. The anointed and the prophets are the patriarchs who experienced the protection of God in their intercourse with Abimelech and Pharaoh, (Gen. xii. 17; xx. 3;) they are called prophets and the anointed, (Gen. xx. 7,) on account of their near relation to God.

V. 19. The word of the Lord, *i. e.* the God-sent dream of Joseph.

V. 22. Chiefly the wisdom for the government of the country.

V. 28. Pharaoh and the Egyptians were always obedient for the moment.

PSALM CVI.

A PSALM of praise, composed during the exile, (v. 4, 5. 47,) containing the confession of guilt which the nation had contracted by their unbelief from the beginning, with the added prayer that the

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Lord would, now as then, be merciful to the chastened people, (v. 47.)

1 HALLELUJAH!
O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?
Who can show forth all his praise?
3 Blessed *are* they that keep judgment,
And he that doeth righteousness at all times.
4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou hast promised unto* thy people:
Oh, visit me with thy salvation;
5 That I may see the good of thy chosen,
That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation,
That I may glory with thine inheritance.
6 We have sinned with our fathers,
We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.
7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt;
They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies;
But provoked *him* at the sea, *even* at the Red Sea.
8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake,
That he might make his mighty power to be known.
9 He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up:
So he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.
10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated *them*,
And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
11 And the waters covered their enemies:
There was not one of them left.
12 Then believed they his words;
They sang his praise.
13 They soon forgat his works;
They waited not for his counsel:
14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness,
And tempted God in the desert.
15 And he gave them their request;
But sent leanness into their soul.*
16 They strove against Moses also in the camp,
And Aaron the saint of the LORD.

* Or, "A disease against their life."

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17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
And covered the company of Abiram.
18 And a fire was kindled in their company;
The flame burned up the wicked.
19 They made a calf in Horeb,
And worshipped the molten image.
20 Thus they changed their glory
Into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.
21 They forgat God their Saviour,
Which had done great things in Egypt;
22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham,
And terrible things by the Red Sea.
23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them,
Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach,
To turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*.
24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land,
They believed not his word:
25 But murmured in their tents,
And hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.
26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them,
To overthrow them in the wilderness:
27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations,
And to scatter them in the lands.
28 They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor,
And ate the sacrifices of the dead.
29 Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions:
And the plague brake in upon them.
30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment:
And *so* the plague was stayed.
31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness
Unto all generations for evermore.
32 They angered *him* also at the waters of strife,
So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:
33 For they provoked his spirit,
So that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.
34 They did not destroy the nations,
Concerning whom the LORD commanded them:
35 But were mingled among the heathen,
And learned their works.
36 And they served their idols:
Which were a snare unto them.
37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons
And their daughters unto devils,

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38 And shed innocent blood,
Even the blood of their sons and of their daughters,
Whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan:
And the land was polluted with blood.
39 Thus were they defiled with their own works,
And went a whoring with their own inventions.
40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people,
Insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.
41 And he gave them into the hand of the heathen;
And they that hated them ruled over them.
42 Their enemies also oppressed them,
And they were brought into subjection under their hand.
43 Many times did he deliver them;
But they provoked him with their counsel,
And were brought low for their iniquity.*
44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction,
When he heard their cry:
45 And he remembered for them his covenant,
And repented according to the multitude of his mercies.
46 He made them also to be pitied
Of all those that carried them captives.
47 Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the heathen,
To give thanks unto thy holy name,
And to triumph in thy praise.

48 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting to everlasting:
And let all the people say, Amen. Hallelujah.

V. 1. The expression, "Hallelujah," *i. e.* "Praise ye the Lord," is prefixed for encouragement's sake to other Psalms. Cxi.—cxiii. on "O give thanks unto the Lord,'" *etc.*, *see* ad. Psalm c. 5.

V. 4—5. The Psalmist suffers with his nation, and hopes to be exalted with his people, humiliation and repentance being the conditions, though he confesses in the name of his people that their tribulation is a just punishment. As in Psalm lxxvii. so here there follows a recounting of alternate faithlessness on the part of the people and of faithfulness on the part of God, who punishes but "in measure," and has never forgotten his covenant of grace.

* *I. e.* "decreased in numbers."

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V. 12. Cf. Exod. xiv. 31.
V. 16. Cf. Numb. xi. xvi.
V. 20. The honour and glory of the people is their glorious God. Cf. Rom. i. 23.
V. 24. Cf. Numb. xiii. 33.
V. 30. Cf. Numb. xxv. 7.
V. 31. Cf. Numb. xxv. 12.
V. 32. Cf. Numb. xx. 13.
V. 48. This Doxology denotes the end of the fourth book of the Psalms.

PSALM CVII.

A PSALM of thanksgiving and of praise. It invites to gratitude those who had been redeemed from the Babylonish captivity, as well as all who are delivered from any kind of trouble, and praises in particular the gracious guidance of God which brought Israel back into their land.

The children of Israel, brought from the wilderness to their native land, shall praise him who heard them when they called upon him, (v. 1—9.) All who were imprisoned because of disobedience, called upon him and were delivered, shall praise him, (v. 10—16.) All whose sins had brought them to the gates of death, but on calling upon him were heard, shall praise him, (v. 17—22.) All who on experiencing the vicissitudes of the sea, called upon him, and were brought to the desired haven, shall praise him, (v. 23—32.) Because of the sins of the people he had laid waste their flourishing country, but made it fruitful again, and blessed the people, (v. 33—38.) They had borne misfortune and trouble, but he had raised them from the dust. The pious shall rejoice over it, and Israel give heed that they may learn to thank the Lord, (v. 39—43.)

1 O GIVE thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*,
Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy:
3 And gathered them out of the lands.
From the east, and from the west,
From the north, and from the sea.
4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way;
They found no city to dwell in.

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5 Hungry and thirsty,
Their soul fainted in them.
6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he delivered them out of their distresses.
7 And he led them forth by the right way,
That they might go to a city of habitation.
8 Oh, that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
9 For he satisfieth the longing soul,
And filleth the hungry soul with goodness.
10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Being bound in affliction and iron;
11 Because they rebelled against the words of God,
And contemned the counsel of the Most High:
12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour;
They fell down, and *there was* none to help.
13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he saved them out of their distresses.
14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death.
And brake their bands in sunder.
15 Oh, that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
16 For he hath broken the gates of brass,
And cut the bars of iron in sunder.
17 The fools because of their transgression,
And because of their iniquities, were afflicted,
18 Their soul abhorred all manner of meat;
And they drew near unto the gates of death.
19 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he saved them out of their distresses.
20 He sent his word, and healed them,
And delivered *them* from their destructions.
21 Oh, that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And declare his works with rejoicing.
23 They that went down to the sea in ships,
That did business in great waters;
24 These saw the works of the LORD,
And his wonders in the deep.
25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
Which lifted up the waves thereof.

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26 They mounted up to the heaven,
They went down again to the depths:
Their soul was melted because of trouble.
27 They reeled to and fro, and staggered like a drunken man,
And were at their wit's end.
28 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he brought them out of their distresses.
29 He made the storm a calm,
So that the waves thereof were still.
30 Then were they glad because they were quiet:
So he brought them unto their desired haven.
31 Oh, that men would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people,
And praise him in the assembly of the elders.
33 He turned rivers into a wilderness,
And the watersprings into dry ground;
34 A fruitful land into barrenness,
For the wickedness of them that dwelt therein.
35 He turned the wilderness into a standing water,
And dry ground into watersprings.
36 And there he made the hungry to dwell,
That they might prepare a city for habitation;
37 And sow the fields and plant vineyards,
Which yielded fruits of increase.
38 He blessed them also, so that they were multiplied greatly;
And suffered not their cattle to decrease.
39 Again, they were minished and brought low
Through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.
40 He poured contempt upon princes,
And caused them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is* no way.
41 Yet did he set the poor on high from affliction.
And made *him* families like a flock.
42 The righteous shall see *it* and rejoice:
And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.
43 Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*,
Even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

V. 1. This invitation to praise prefixed to Psalm cvi. recurs also Psalm cxviii. 1.

V. 3. The enumeration of the different countries is either poetical or refers, beside the captive Israelites at Babylon, to the

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dispersed of the nation who had fled to surrounding countries, *e. g.* Egypt, Moab, *etc.* Cf. ad. Psalm lxxiv. 9.

V. 10—22. Commentators are divided in their opinion whether the reference is to Israel in the Babylonish captivity, or to prison and disease in general. But why should this passage not have a more general application besides its primary reference to Israel? The praise in verse 20, "He sent his word," is very remarkable: the word is described as the effusion of God, his ministering angel. This expression conceals the truth, that every Divine operation in the world is effected by his eternal word.

V. 23—32. If the Psalmist in the preceding verses simply contemplated the trouble of his nation in exile, it cannot but strike us as strange that he connects them with trials of a more general kind, such as mariners have to endure; and the best solution of the difficulty is to assume that the reference was not exclusively to Israel, but to all similarly afflicted.

V. 33—41.. There is again a more special regard to the experience of his nation: the language resembles Isaiah xli. 18, and probably alludes to that passage.

PSALM CVIII.

At a time of great national depression this Psalm was composed of two portions of older psalms, of Psalm lvii. 8—12 and Psalm lx. 7—14, and the latter portion is intended to remind God of his promises, to fulfil them to his people.

PSALM CIX.

It was perhaps composed under circumstances similar to Psalm lxix. The object of derision, (v. 25,) of imprecation, (v. 17—28,) and persecution unto death, (v. 16,) to those whom he had loved and benefitted (v. 4, 5,) David refrained from every opposition except that of prayer. "But I give myself unto prayer," (v. 4.) In calling him to vengeance who says, "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense," he flings back their curse with such a vehemence upon their head, that the impression remains that he was not altogether devoid of vindictive feelings, although his enemies appear as unsusceptible to the love of God and man, and David expressly

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declares, (v. 27,) that all he desires is, that they may know that the Lord is God* (*see* Introduction, the paragraph on the ethics of the Psalms, and also notes, ad. Ps. xli. 11.)

He describes the enormous guilt of his adversaries, (v. 1—5.) He imprecates upon them what they had imprecated upon him, (v. 11—21,) and appeals to the mercy of God in portraying his wretched condition, (v. 21—25.) He prays for the manifestation of the retributive justice of God, and that his enemies might attain to knowledge, and promises sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, (v. 25—30.)

TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

1 Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise:
2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me:
They have spoken against me with a lying tongue,
3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred;
And fought against me without a cause.
4 For my love they are my adversaries:
But I *give myself unto* prayer.
5 And they have rewarded me evil for good,
And hatred for my love.
6 Set thou a wicked man over him:
And let the accuser stand at his right hand.
7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned:
And let his prayer become sin.
8 Let his days be few;
And let another take his office.†
9 Let his children be fatherless,
And his wife a widow.
10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg:
Let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places.
11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath;
And let the strangers spoil his labour.

* D. Michælis (also Muentinghe, Mendelssohn, Knapp, 1st Edition) holds that verses 6—19 are the expressions of the cursing adversary who speaks in the singular. But, first, verse 15 has the plural; secondly, verse 17 can only apply to the adversary; and, thirdly, verse 20 shows that David sent back the curses upon the head of his enemies.

† Some translate, "his goods," (D. Michælis,) but since his possessions, his goods are not mentioned till verse 11, and since the present clause is parallel to the thought, "he shall early end his life," it is better to translate, "his office."

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12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him:
Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.
13 Let his posterity be cut off;
And in the generation following let their name be blotted out.
14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD;
And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.
15 Let them be before the LORD continually,
That he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.*
16 Because that he remembered not to show mercy,
But persecuted the poor and needy man,
That he might even slay the broken in heart.
17 As he loved cursing so let it come unto him:
As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.
18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment,
So let it come within him like water,
And like oil into his bones.
19 Let it be unto him as the garment *which* covereth him.
And for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.
20 *Let* this *be* the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD,
And of them that speak evil against my soul.
21 But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord,
For thy name's sake:
Because thy mercy *is* good, deliver thou me;
22 For I *am* poor and needy,
And my heart is wounded within me.
23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth:
I am tossed up and down like the locust,
24 My knees are weak through fasting;
And my flesh faileth of fatness.
25 I became also a reproach unto them:
When they look upon me they shake their heads.
26 Help me, O LORD my God:
O save me according to thy mercy:
27 That they may know that this *is* thy hand;
That thou, LORD, hast done it.
28 Let them curse, but bless THOU:
When they arise, let them be ashamed;
But let thy servant rejoice.

* The first "them," refers to the sin and iniquity of verse 14; the second "them," to the adversaries.

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29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame,
And let them cover themselves with their own confusion,
as with a mantle.
30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth;
Yea, I will praise him among the multitude.
31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor,
To save *him* from those that condemn his soul.

V. 1—5. Beginning with calling God his praise, David contemptuously casts off the reports and defence of men, and confesses the all-sufficiency of God in the conduct of his affairs. He has to deal with men who, so far from having been provoked by unkindness on his part, stood proof against the love and benefits which he had shown to them. Their most venomous reproaches could not excite David to personal revenge. He remembered that the Lord had said, "Vengeance is mine: I will recompense." Thus he prayed while they were raging, supplicating patience for himself and recompense for his reproachers. (Psalms xxxv. 13; cxli. 5.)

V. 6—16. However terrible these deprecations may sound, they are uttered as sinful only if their fulfilment yields *delight* and not *pain* to the utterer: if we were compelled to say that David would not have greatly preferred the conversion of his adversaries *without* such a retribution, than *with* and *by* it (the retribution.) But when the punishment of hardened sinners is desired so vehemently, as is the case here, its eventual occurrence is generally regarded with complacency. Equanimity is always allied to Divine wrath. The curse is this: he shall find an unrelenting accuser before the tribunal of men, condemnation in the judgment of God —his prayer shall be changed into sin (as it must be in the case of the obdurate)—his life be cut off in the midst of his days—his office be given to strangers, so that his wife and children shall be in want—his posterity be cut off—and the transgression of the parents be visited on such of their posterity as are alike unto them. (*See* ad. Psalm ciii.; Matt. xxiii. 35.) We should not forget that however hard, uncommon, and terrible these words may sound, God nevertheless daily brings that curse upon gross sinners: their life often comes to a sudden and fearful end, the last sigh assumes the form of a blasphemy on their unclean lips, their wife and children are in want, and the transgressions and passions of parents reappear in the lives of unworthy offspring. Every *consequence* of sin is a punishment, and punishments proceed from the living God. And is not man permitted to *desire* that God should do what he really does, provided he *desire it in that sense in which God does it?* We are not familiar with the family history of the "son of perdition," the hardened Judas; but in so far as we are acquainted with his history, that curse was realized in him. He was con-

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demned in the judgment of God, (Matt. xxvi. 24;) his prayer, if he prayed at all, can only have been that of despair; he ended his life in the midst of his days, and another took his office. Peter has therefore justly applied this passage to him. (Acts i. 20.)

V. 17—20. The adversary indulged in cursing, as if he were altogether unaware of its meaning: so shall cursing fall to his lot, pierce his bone and marrow, that he may learn what cursing is. Divine punishment deals with the sinner as the sinner has dealt with God: attacking the right and dignity of God and man, he is himself attacked in his prosperity, that he may learn what *He* has done.

V. 21—25. He represents his wretched condition to God, who might perchance be moved to vouchsafe his aid: he takes his standing on grace, not on right, and describes the consequences of his troubles: he is like a disappearing evening shadow, like the locust, chased from place to place, grief makes him loathe nourishment, and strength has fled from his body.

V. 26—31. In praying for the help of God, he confines himself not to his own *welfare*, but prays for the hand of God to become known among men as the hand of a righteous Judge. The Psalmist endeavours to assure himself of Divine favour, since, if we are convinced that God is our friend, all the enterprises, attacks, and enmities of men shall prove utterly vain and impotent. In praying he attains to the assurance of eventual deliverance, and promises unrestrained praise and gratitude among men, because, though men may have condemned the poor, the Lord is as a mighty advocate at their right hand, who will crown their cause with victory.

PSALM CX.

A PSALM of David, celebrating the victory of Messiah as a priestly king.* Just as the prophets represent the Messiah under the

* Those who reject the Messianic interpretation of this psalm must either straightway reject the title, or render it "a psalm concerning David." It may be shown that the psalm cannot refer to a king of Israel. Could it be said of such a one that God would set him down at his right hand? 1 Chron. xxviii. 5; xxix. 23, have been quoted in support of this supposition; but the throne of Israel which is there called the throne of God refers to the throne which God himself had established in Israel, on which the king is seated as a *representative* and not as an *assessor*. *Ewald* has the forced rendering, "sit thou in my triumphal car;" the view of *Kimchi* and *Bleek*, that being seated at the right hand of God is expressive of Divine protection, is more admissible; but it can be shown that being seated at the right hand of a king denotes familiarity with him *and a participation of his dignity*. No king of Israel moreover held the regal and priestly

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threefold character of king, (Isa. ix. 11; Zech. ix.) prophet and priest, and describe his victory over the world, now by the figure of a martial triumphal procession, now as a reconcilement by priestly activity, by prayer and vicarious suffering, and again by instruction, so Psalms ii. lxxii.; 2 Sam. xxiii. set forth the Messiah as a victorious king, and Psalm cx. as a Divine Sovereign, uniting in himself regal and priestly dignity. The fulfilment of history reveals the manner in which the ideas involved in that figurative description should find their realization. The Son of God, after having been a teacher, benefactor, and sufferer in a state of humiliation, should make atonement for his people, attain thereby to government, and eventually reveal in outward glory the kingdom of God, which he had inwardly established. Cf. ad. Psalm ii. The figurative sense of the expressions borrowed from earthly warfare is clear from the circumstance that the sovereign militant is called a priest, who makes atonement for his people, and that his army are an army of priests. Our Lord himself states, (Matt. xxii. 43,) that David called his son "in spirit," his Lord, *i. e.* inspired by God. 2 Samuel xxiii. 2, David ascribes to himself Divine inspiration.

David hears "in spirit" the call of God, which invites the Messiah to the participation of his power and gives him the victory, (v. 1—3.) His call, like that of Melchizedek, is that of a priestly king; supported by his God he shall have dominion over all his enemies, (v. 4—7.)

A PSALM of David.

1 The LORD said unto my Lord,
"SIT THOU AT MY RIGHT HAND,
UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES THY FOOTSTOOL."

office conjointly. 1 Sam. xiii. 9; xiv. 32; 2 Sam. vi. 17, 18; 1 Kings viii. 5, are quoted to show that the kings of Israel did offer sacrifice; but that refers to the slaying of the victims only, which in former times was done by the owner and not by the priest. See *Winer's Lexicon, s. v. "Sacrifice,"* p. 213. It can be demonstrated that this is the meaning of 1 Kings viii. 5, where it is said that Solomon and the *people* did sacrifice. The fact that the Psalmist has to go back to hoary antiquity for the purpose of finding an instance of the union of the priesthood and royality, militates still further against this view. When Uzziah presumed to sacrifice upon the altar of incense, he was smitten with leprosy, (2 Chron. xxvi.) The warriors of the king in this psalm are priestly warriors. *Ewald* and *Maurer* acknowledge that the psalm belongs to the age of David. *Köster*, who defends the Messianic interpretation, calls it, "a song the artistic finish and poetic elevation of which render it sublime." It breaks off suddenly, but that is by no means a proof that it is merely a fragment. Cf. Psalms lxxxix. lxxviii. lxxvii.

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2 The LORD shall send the rod (*i. e.* sceptre) of thy strength
out of Zion:
Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.
3 Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power,
In the beauties of holiness, more than the womb of the
morning,
Thou shalt have the dew of thy youth.
4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent,
"Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."
5 The Lord at thy right hand
Shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.
6 He shall judge among the heathen,
He shall fill *the places* with the dead bodies;
He shall wound the heads over many countries.*
7 He shall drink of the brook in the way:
Therefore shall he lift up the head.

V. 1, 2. David hears, as in 2 Sam. xxiii. 1—3, "in the spirit," (Cf. Rev. i. 10,) a Divine oracle respecting the Messiah. The Lord promises Divine perfection of power to his descendant, and David straightway acknowledges as his Lord him who enjoys such superhuman dignity. Although the phrase, "until I make thine enemies thy footstool," does not expressly state that his being seated at the right hand of God should continue till that time and then cease, yet the Psalmist contemplates the possession of Divine perfection of power for the specific purpose of victory over his enemies. The apostle has taken these words in the same sense when he says, (1 Cor. xv. 24—26,) "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," and mentions as a consequence the surrender of the kingdom to God the Father. When Christ shall have conquered everything in man which opposes the completion of the kingdom of God, then shall the dominion of God over believers cease to be one mediated by Christ, but God shall be all in all. Zion, the outward primarily, but ultimately the spiritual Zion and Israel, shall be the centre, whence the dominion of God over man shall begin and from whence it shall be extended. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isaiah ii. 3.) "In the midst of his enemies," *i. e.* the Son of God shall display his dominion while encircled by his enemies. This is an emphatic description of his victorious power.

V. 3. Those who fight beneath the standard of that king follow him with willing hearts. He reigns over them because he is their priest, has through his mediation purchased them of God and sanc-

* Tholuck's version is, "He shall judge among the heathen, he shall make a great slaughter, he shall crush the heads far over the country."

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tified them as priests. (Rev. i. 6; Isaiah lxi. 6.) Hence they are said to appear festively adorned, *i. e.* in the garb of priests. (Psalm xxix. 2; 1 Chron. xvi. 29; 2 Chron. xx. 21.) They go into the wars of their God, as into a holy assembly. So Psalm xcvi. 9 calls upon the nations, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him all the earth." The Lord calls his people "a little flock;" but compares them elsewhere to a corn of mustard seed which grows into a large tree and becomes the shelter of the birds of the air, and "the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." (Rev. xix. 6.) Isaiah says, (Isa. liv. 1—3,) "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left." Fresh and innumerable as the dew-drops in the splendour of dawn shall be the youthfully strong hosts of this king. (2 Sam. xvii. 12; Psalm cxxxiii. 3; Mic. v. 6; Job. xxxviii. 28.) "The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isa. xxxiii. 24.)

V. 4. The Lord has solemnly and irrevocably sworn that this king is a priest—not a priest of the Levite order, but a patriarchal priest, after the order of Melchizedek, (Gen. xiv.:) His priesthood is eternal. Passages in the Prophets predict the cessation of the Levitical priesthood in the last time.*

V. 5, 6. The Lord shall fight at the right hand of his anointed, and conquer all his adversaries. He shall greatly extend his victories among the heathen. As a hero, unspoiled and without much stoppage, drinks of the brook by the way, (Cf. Judges vii. 5—7,) so shall He combat without stoppage, and therefore boldly raise his head.†

* Isa. lxvi. 21; Zech. xiv. 20, 21. The great doctrine of this passage is expanded in the Epistle to the Hebrews, (chap. vii.) In the same manner, Zechariah predicts the union of regal and priestly dignity in the Messiah, (chap. vi.) Chap. iii. 6 of that prophet are next to Isa. liii. the most important Messianic passages in the Old Testament.

† Amyraldus: "Hostibus ne momentum quidem temporis dabit ad respirandum. Adeo ut vix ipse sibi hoc indulgeat, ut in eorum persecutione, levata aliquantisper galea, aquam e torrente haustam properantissime bibat." Several commentators, Solomon ben Melech, Bucerus, D. Michælis, explain with reference to Numb. xxiii. 24: "He shall still his thirst at the stream of blood by the way." Luther, Calov, Stier: "On the way, *i. e.* on the way of life, he shall drink of the waters of affliction," for *water* means *sufferings*, (Ps. lxix. 1)—on that account he became exalted above every creature, (Phil. ii. 8, 9.)

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PSALM CXI.

A PSALM of praise, celebrating the manifold goodness of God, especially towards his people. Luther regards it at a paschal psalm, and verse 5 as a praise of the paschal Lamb.

1 PRAISE ye the Lord.
I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart,
In the assembly of the upright, and *in* the congregation.
2 The works of the LORD *are* great,
Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.*
3 His work *is* honourable and glorious:
And his righteousness endureth for ever.
4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered:
The LORD, gracious and full of compassion.
5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him:
He will ever be mindful of his covenant.
6 He hath showed his people the power of his works,
That he may give them the heritage of the heathen.
7 The works of his hands *are* verity and judgment;
All his commandments *are* sure.
8 They are established for ever and ever,
And are done in truth and uprightness.
9 He sent redemption unto his people:
He hath commanded his covenant for ever:
Holy and reverend *is* his name.
10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom:
A good understanding have all they that do *his commandments:*
His praise endureth for ever.

V. 1—4. The Psalmist confesses himself prompted from within to the praise of the Lord. Considering the concealment of that praise as tantamount to depriving the Lord of half his glory, he resolves to publish it in the right place, namely, the assembly of believers. The works of the Lord furnish rich materials for his praise. All possible desires of his people are already satisfied in the works of the Lord: many of them may, at first sight, be stumbling blocks and rocks of offence to us, but the longer the mind of man is engaged and absorbed in the contemplation of the works of the Lord, and the more human wisdom, instead of running in the van of the doings of God, modestly retires to the rear, the more

* Or, "Enough for all their (the upright's) desire."

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will they manifest the most perfect wisdom. His honour and glory are everywhere visible, for all his works display his righteousness; *i. e.* his perfect justice and praiseworthiness. (*Vide* ad. Ps. xcviii. 2.) His marvellous works are so widely diffused and unmistakeable, that mankind cannot lose their memory, and that even in the worst times, which witness the servitude of the flesh, his worshippers cannot be wanting. He meets deluded man in a thousand ways, for His every work and doing, if viewed from a right point of view, is a guide to the gracious and compassionate Lord.

V. 5—9. He hath never left unsupplied the wants of those that fear him, (Psalm cxxxii. 15)—procured food in the desert, and drink to gush out of rocks: he will never repent of his covenant with the patriarchs. He is also the God of the heathen, and though not recognized, has manifested the works of his hands among them, (Amos ix. 7,) but above all, He has shown them to his people, (Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20,) and given them the possession of the heathen for an heritage. As his commandments are true and just, so are his works. Therefore his commandments are eternal: they continue as the fundamental laws of his kingdom for ever and ever. He has by his power redeemed his people, and given them an everlasting covenant.

V. 10. The praise of the Lord is followed by the praise of the fear of the Lord: praise is succeeded by exhortation. The fear of the Lord is the starting point of all true *wisdom:* any inquiry respecting things celestial or things terrestrial, if conducted in the fear of the Lord, is sure to lead to the right way: but it is no less the true source of real wisdom of life; for since "godliness is profitable unto *all* things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come," (1 Tim. iv. 8,) it proves also a blessing in every temporal work and pursuit. (Ps. cxix. 98—100.) The praise of the Lord neither can nor shall cease for ever.

PSALM CXII.

A PSALM of instruction, similar to Psalms i. and XXXVII.

1 PRAISE ye the LORD.
Blessed *is* the man *that* feareth the LORD,
That delighteth greatly in his commandments.
2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth:
The generation of the upright shall be blessed.

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3 Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house;
And his righteousness endureth for ever.
4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness,
From him who is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.
5 *That* man shall *fare* well who showeth favour and lendeth:
He shall guide his affairs with judgment.
6 Surely he shall not be moved for ever:
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.
7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:
His heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.
8 His heart *is* established, he shall not be afraid,
Until he see *his desire* upon his enemies.
9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor;
His righteousness endureth for ever;
His horn shall be exalted with honour.
10 The wicked shall see *it*, and be grieved;
He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away:
The desire of the wicked shall perish.

PSALM CXIII.

A PSALM of praise. The Lord, though high and lifted up, condescends to favour the lowly, regards it his peculiar employment to advocate their cause, and to conduct them from the dust to glory. This is the fundamental idea in the songs of Hannah and Mary. (1 Sam. ii.; Luke i.) This psalm seems to be the echo of the former; see verse 9, and cf. verses 7, 8, with 1 Samuel ii. 8: "God is a father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows." (Psalm lxviii. 6.) This beautiful appellative contains the same truth.

Psalms cxiii. cxiv. cxv. cxvi. cxvii. and cxviii. form a cycle of prayers which the Jews call Hallel, and used to sing at some of their festivals, especially at the Passover. (This is stated in the Talmud, and alluded to in Matthew xxvi. 30.)

1 PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise, O ye servants of the LORD,
Praise the name of the LORD.
2 Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and for evermore.

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3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same
The LORD's name is to be praised.
4 The LORD *is* high above all nations,
And his glory as far as the heavens.
5 Who *is* like unto the LORD our God,
Who dwelleth on high,
6 Who humbleth *himself* to behold
The things that are in heaven and in the earth?
7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;
8 That he may set *him* with princes,
Even with the princes of his people.
9 He maketh the barren woman to dwell in an house
Like a joyful mother of children.
Praise ye the LORD.

PSALM CXIV.

A PSALM of praise, simple and sublime, which celebrates God's powerful deliverance of his people from Egypt.

1 WHEN Israel went out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language;
2 Judah became his sanctuary,
And Israel his dominion,
3 The sea saw *it*, and fled:
Jordan was driven back.
4 The mountains skipped like rams,
And the little hills like lambs.
5 What *ailed* thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?
Thou Jordan, *that* thou wast driven back?
6 Ye mountains, *that* ye skipped like rams?
And ye little hills, like lambs?
7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the God of Jacob;
8 Which turned the rock *into* a standing water,
The flint into a fountain of waters.

V. 1—4. Israel have ceased to be their own masters from the time when the Lord purchased them as his grateful possession by

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his wonderful deliverance out of Egypt, and gave them on Sinai his law; they are now a kingdom of priests and a royal priesthood, (Exod. xix. 6.) How mighty is the God under whose protection they are, whom nature obeyed, before whom the invincible ocean fled, the solid foundations of the mountains gave way, so that they skipped like rams and lambs!

V. 5, 6. The Psalmist intends emphatically to shame the obtuseness of men, one portion of whom refuse obedience to the Lord, while the other pass by in indifference. He asks, therefore, the irrational but potent forces of nature to name the overwhelming power before which the mountains and the sea tremblingly receded.

V. 7, 8. He now pronounces for the first time the name of the Lord, and calls not only upon the mountains and the sea, but upon the earth to tremble before the Lord, as Sinai trembled and smoked when the Lord descended on it. (Exod. xix. 18.) Reverting once more to the history of Israel, he shows that even the most solid elements of the earth must dissolve at the word of God.

PSALM CXV.

A PSALM of prayer and of praise, composed in a time of pagan oppression. As it is a temple-song, like those which, after the return from captivity, used to be sung in antiphonics or choruses, (Ezra iii. 11,) it probably belongs to that period.

May the Lord glorify his people before the blind heathen for his name's sake, (v. 1—8.) The people encourage themselves to confidence and experience of the Divine blessing, (v. 9—15.) Men enjoy mundane existence for the praise of God: he shall therefore be praised for ever and ever, (v. 16—18.)

The Levite singers.

1 NOT unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But unto thy name give glory,
For thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake.
2 Wherefore should the heathen say,
Where *is* now their God?
3 But our God *is* in the heavens:
He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.
4 Their idols *are* silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.

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5 They have mouths—but they speak not:
Eyes have they—but they see not:
6 They have ears—but they hear not:
Noses have they—but they smell not:
7 They have hands—but they handle not:
Feet have they—but they walk not:
Neither speak they through their throat.
8 They that make them let them become like unto them;
And every one that trusteth in them.

The Precentor.

9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD:

The Chorus.

He *is* their help and their shield.

The Precentor.

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD:

The Chorus.

He *is* their help and their shield.

The Precentor.

11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD:

The Chorus.

He *is* their help and their shield.

The Levite singers.

12 The LORD hath been mindful of us; he will bless us;
He will bless the house of Israel;
He will bless the house of Aaron.
13 He will bless them that fear the LORD,
Both small and great.
14 The LORD shall increase you more and more,
You and your children.
15 Ye *are* blessed of the LORD
Which made heaven and earth.
16 The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD'S:
But the earth hath he given to the children of men.
17 The dead praise not the LORD,
Neither any that go down into silence.

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18 But WE will bless the LORD
From this time forth and for evermore.
Praise the LORD.

V. 1—3. The people penitently confess that for their virtue's or merit's sake they have no claim upon the redemption of the Lord, and pray that the Lord would have mercy for his name's sake. (Isaiah xlviii. 11; Ps. cxxxv. 15—18.) Are the heathen to regard, as they do, the God of Israel as a phantom of impotence? The people meet that wicked thought in holy boldness with the shield of faith, since their God is as infinite as the heavens, and does whatever he wills. The union of the two sentences in v. 3, shows that the appellative, "God *in the heavens*," implies no limitation of power, but that he is exalted above earthly limits as the heavens are high and infinite above the earth.

V. 4—8. How shall the idols of the heathen sustain a comparison with this God? They are formed of earthly materials, while the living God has made man: they owe their existence to human hands, and though representations of the human form are inferior to man, for they are *soulless* representations. It is the curse of every false religion that man becomes like his god: the worshippers of a *soulless* god get soulless themselves. The indignant Psalmist wishes them that punishment.

V. 9—11. The congregation gather strength and encouragement to persevere in their confidence, exhorting the laity, the priests, (Psalm cxviii. 2, 3,) and then all who fear the Lord. In Psalm cxxxv. 19, 20, where this exhortation is repeated, (also v. 15—18 are taken from this psalm,) the Levites are mentioned besides the priests of the house of Aaron. For the sake of greater vividness the two halves of v. 9—11 were probably sung by the precentor and the chorus, (Neh. xii. 42,) in such a manner that the latter fell in when the former had done.

V. 12—15. The entire chorus pronounces the blessing of God, who is not a soulless idol, but the Creator and Governor of heaven and earth, upon the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, all that fear him, both great and small, upon present and future generations.

V. 16—18. The Lord is enthroned in the heavens, exalted above all. He has prepared the earth for the special benefit of man. (Isaiah xlv. 18.) He has prepared it designing that they should inhabit it and enjoy the light of life, and by their praises render it a temple of the Lord, for this can be done by the living only. (Ps. vi. 6; lxxxviii. 11.) The congregation of Israel promise the fulfilment of that task, and will praise him for evermore.

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PSALM CXVI.

A DELIGHTFUL psalm of thanksgiving, some passages of which, *e. g.* v. 8. 5. 11, are taken from other psalms: its language too refers its date to the period after the captivity.

The Psalmist deems himself happy for having experienced the blessings of granted prayers, (v. 1—6;) in his trouble he had prayed in faith, enjoys present peace, and would gladly recompense the goodness of the Lord, (v. 7—12.) He expresses the enthusiastic resolution henceforth to pray and praise right from the heart, (v. 13—19.)

1 THIS is my delight, that the LORD hath heard
My voice *and* my supplications.
2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me,
Therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.
3 The sorrows of death compassed me,
And the pains of hell gat hold upon me:
I found trouble and sorrow.
4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD;
O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.
5 Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yea, our God *is* merciful.
6 The LORD preserveth the simple:
I was brought low, and he helped me.
7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul;
For the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.
8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death,
Mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling.
9 I will walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.
10 I believed, therefore have I (or, "though I said") spoken:
I am greatly afflicted:
11 I said in my haste,
All men *are* liars.
12 What shall I render unto the LORD
For all his benefits toward me?
13 I will take the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD.
14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD
Now in the presence of all his people.
15 Precious in the sight of the LORD
Is the death of his saints.

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16 O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant;
I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thy handmaid:
Thou hast loosed my bonds.
17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And will call upon the name of the LORD.
18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD
Now in the presence of all his people,
19 In the courts of the LORD'S house,
In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.
Praise ye the LORD.

V. 1, 2. It is indeed a great thing to know from our own experience that we have a reconciled Father in heaven, who cares for us, and, though infinitely exalted, hears the cry of poor troubled mortals. The Psalmist speaks in joyous strains of the gracious answers to his prayers, and regards them as a solemn admonition, in every kind of trouble, to cling to the true helper.

V. 3—6. The suppliant could look back upon the experience of a David, and adopts the language of David to describe the abyss of his perils, (Psalm xviii. 4:) he is happy in being able to join the thousands and thousands who, from their own experience, confess to the righteousness of the beautiful name which the Lord has given himself, Exod. xxxiv. 6. "The Lord preserveth the simple." (Psalm cxix. 130; Acts ii. 47.) The term simple equals the "simplicity" of the New Testament, namely, that pure mind towards God, which, without looking out for help from any other quarter, and free from all dissimulation, expects salvation from him alone.

V. 7—12. This passage denies not the necessity incumbent upon the godly to strive for peace of heart, though deliverance from the Lord should linger to be forthcoming. Psalm xciv. 19 shows the very contrary; but man is weak, and peace is generally subsequent to the answer to our prayers. The Psalmist exhorts himself to be at ease, now that every motive for uneasiness has vanished. He has been delivered from death, he resolves therefore to spend his recovered life with a constant regard to Him to whom he owes his present happiness. The prayer of faith only is effectual: the Psalmist therefore testifies that in temptation he was by no means devoid of faith. He believed when he sighed, "I am greatly afflicted."* His faith made him even then confess to the treachery of every human aid, and to cling solely to the heavenly Helper, (Psalm xxxi. 23,) as it is said elsewhere, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." (Psalm cxviii. 8.)

V. 13—19. As it were astonished at the magnitude of Divine

* Paul cites this passage, 2 Cor. iv. 13, from the LXX., which, however, does not well suit the connection.

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goodness, he asks, verse 12, how he could sufficiently display his gratitude. This is a question which should every day stream from the heart of man, since there is nothing more reprehensible than to thoughtlessly receive the blessings of God as matters of course. The reply to that question needs not much consideration, since God has expressly declared (Ps. l. 23) that a sincere prayer of thanksgiving is the most grateful sacrifice to him. Such sacrifices the Psalmist resolves to offer openly in the presence of all the people; he will pay his vows in the courts of the temple (congregational worship was then confined to that locality.) The figure of verse 13 requires elucidation. Feasts of joy were connected with thank-offerings, at which a libation of wine used to be poured out in honour of the Lord: he, therefore, calls the cup of thanksgiving the cup of salvation. Verse 15 points back to Psalm lxxii. 14.

PSALM CXVII.

THIS psalm, which invites not only Israel but all the nations of the earth to engage in the praise of the Lord, (Rom. xv. 11,) as Psalms xcvi. 1; c. 1, used to be sung at the festivals in the temple.

1 O PRAISE the LORD, all ye nations:
Praise him, all ye people.
2 For his merciful kindness ruleth mightily over us:
And the truth of the LORD *endureth* for ever.
Praise ye the LORD.

PSALM CXVIII.

A SUBLIME festal psalm. Verses 5—18 favour the view that it was sung concerning a victorious prince, but the sequel does not agree with that view, since verses 19—26 are addressed to several persons, nor can that prince be identified. He cannot be David, for several internal reasons. The formula description of temple songs—verses 1. 29, as well as verses 2—4, cf. with Psalms cxv. cxxxvi.—indicate that the psalm belongs to a period subsequent to the captivity. (Cf. ad. Ps. c. 5.) But no king of Israel of that age could use the language of verses 5—18. The only remaining

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view is that the whole people speak in that passage of their degradation before and during the exile, (Cf. Ps. lxxi. 20, with verse 17,) and their marvellous deliverance. Verse 24 shows that it was sung at a feast, and verses 15. 27 that it was the feast of tabernacles. (Cf. ad. Ps. xxvii.)*

The procession moves towards the temple; Levite singers heard it, and invite to the praise of the Lord in the liturgic formula, with which they also conclude, (v. 1—4.) The precentor sings of the trouble of the people, of the infallibility of Divine aid, and the courageous faith of the delivered, (v. 5—18.) The people desire to pay their gratitude to the Lord, and the Levites posted inside the court invite them thither, (v. 19, 20.) The people celebrate the mercy which exalts the deeply-humiliated, (v. 21—25.) Another invitation from the Levites from the court follows, (v. 26, 27,) and the singers conclude in the name of the congregation with the resolution to praise the Lord and an invitation thereto, (v. 28, 29.)

The Levite singers of the procession.

1 O GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good:
Because his mercy *endureth* for ever.
2 Let Israel now say,
That his mercy *endureth* for ever.
3 Let the house of Aaron now say,
That his mercy *endureth* for ever.
4 Let them now that fear the LORD say,
That his mercy endureth for ever.

The Precentor.

5 I called upon the LORD in distress:
The LORD answered me *and set me* free.
6 The LORD *is* on my side;
I will not fear: what can man do unto me?
7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me:
Therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me.
8 *It is* better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in man.

* Since our Lord and his apostles apply verse 22 to the Messiah (Matt. xxi. 42, Acts iv. 11,) Tarnov, Calov, Geyer, have interpreted the whole psalm not only *of* the Messiah but as the language of the Messiah, yet not without being conscious of the forcedness of their interpretation. Theodoret, Augustin, and Klauss regard verses 5—18 as said by the congregation; Luther explains the first verses of that passage in the same sense, saying that it was indifferent to him whether the Psalmist was speaking in verses 10—13 of himself or of Christians. If that passage and verse 21 are inapplicable to the Messiah, it follows that our Lord, by quoting verse 22 in his address to the Pharisees, simply means to say that the expression of the Psalmist had its truth and fulfilment also in relation to himself.

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9 *It is* better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in princes.
10 All nations compassed me about;
But in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.
11 They compassed me about;
Yea, they compassed me about:
But in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.
12 They compassed me about like bees;
They are quenched as the fire of thorns:
For in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.
13 They thrust sore at me that I might fall:
But the LORD helped me.
14 The LORD *is* my strength and song,
And is become my salvation.
15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tabernacles of the righteous:
"The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.
16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted:
The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly."
17 I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the LORD.
18 The LORD hath chastened me sore:
But he hath not given me over unto death.

The Levite singers of the procession.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will go into them, *and* I will praise the Lord:

The Levite singers in the outer court.

20 This *is* the gate of the LORD,
Into which the righteous shall enter.

The Levite singers of the procession.

21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me,
And art become my salvation.
22 The stone *which* the builders refused
Is become the head *stone* of the corner.
23 This is the LORD'S doing:
It *is* marvellous in our eyes.
24 This *is* the day *which* the LORD hath made:
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD:
O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

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The Levite singers in the outer court.

26 Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD:
We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.
27 God *is* the LORD, which hath showed us light:
Bind the sacrifice with cords, *even* unto the horns of the altar.*

The Levite singers of the procession.

28 Thou *art* my God, and I will praise thee:
Thou art my God, I will exalt thee.
29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

V. 1—4. The joyous formula which is to celebrate the praise of the Lord, receives, by the repetition of its last clause by the people and the priests in particular, a strong amen!

V. 5—14. The prayer-hearing and answering God has assured their hearts that he is an all-sufficient helper; and though helpless men and even the princes of the earth should promise their aid, the honour is always due to *his* protection. The glorious deliverance which the people of God had realized gives them the assurance of future triumphs. Now since from the establishment of the Church of Christ, the Israel after the flesh has become the Israel after the spirit, and partakes of the promises and privileges of the ancient covenant people, the Church is entitled to the appropriation of the confidence which is expressed in this passage, and to join in the solemn words of this psalm. Luther appropriated this psalm for his peculiar comfort, and had, according to Matthesius, verse 17 written against his study wall, writing, "This is my psalm, which I love. Though I love all the Psalms and the Scriptures, and regard them as the comfort of my life, yet have I had such experience of this psalm, that it must remain, and shall be called my psalm, for it has been very precious to me, has delivered me out of many troubles, and without it neither emperor, kings, the wise and prudent, nor saints, could have helped me."

V. 15—18. Immediately after Israel's return from the captivity, they kept a solemn feast of tabernacles, which feast was held in special reverence by the people, (Ezra iii. 4; cf. Neh. viii. 15;) this psalm, could not, however, have been sung on that occasion, because the temple was as yet unbuilt, though it was sung at a time when the memory of the wonderful right hand of the Lord, which having sorely chastised them had exalted them again, was still alive in their remembrance.

* Tholuck renders, "Decorate the feast with wreaths to the horns of the altar."

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V. 19, 20. An address to the temple-gates, similar to that in Psalm xxiv. 7. Here, however, the people, and not the Lord himself, desire to enter and to sacrifice in the Divinely appointed place for worship. "The gates of righteousness" are so called, as may be inferred from verse 20, since really none but the righteous were to be admitted. (*See* ad. Psalm xv.)

V. 21—25. The gratitude for granted prayer is followed by the proverbial expression (v. 22,) which sets forth that deliverance came to the people of God, at a time when its deep degradation gave no sort of hope that it should ever attain to so exalted an honour. The essential part of this honour consisted in their being raised from the dust of humiliation, that they should become the foundation in the building of the eternal kingdom of God. Salvation flows from the Jews; Israel is the good olive tree on which the Gentiles have been grafted. Since with the single exception of the day of atonement, all the Divinely appointed feasts were days of rejoicing, the feast of tabernacles in particular, which Josephus calls the *greatest* of feasts, the invitation to rejoicing contemplates primarily festal gladness, which became, however, heightened by songs of praise for experienced deliverance. The very expressive, "Save, O Lord (Hosannah,) O Lord, send now prosperity," with which our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem was hailed, (Matt. xxi. 9,) was so entensively used by the Jews at the feast of tabernacles, that the boughs with which they constructed the booths were called "Hosannah," and the seventh day of the feast distinguished as the great Hosannah.

V. 26, 27. Every one should enter into the temple in the name of the Lord, *i. e.* in obedience to his commandment and with thoughts of him: those who entered in that manner should be welcomed with the blessing of the Lord. The expression, "he that cometh in the name of the Lord," has been particularly applied to the Messiah, who came in obedience to the command and in the power of God, whose entrance into Jerusalem was also hailed with these words. (Matt. xxi. 9; cf. Luke xiii. 25.)* The people used on those festive days to carry branches of the olive, balsam, myrtle, and palm-trees in their hands, and to build with them booths in their roofs, in their courts, but also in the courts of the temple. Neh. viii. 16. (The feast fell not into spring-time, but after the fruit and vine harvest.) Those booth garlands should extend to the horns of the altar of burnt-offerings.†

* It is very questionable whether this expression has occasioned the Messiah's appellation of ὁ ἐρχόμενος. From Rev. xxii. 20, it seems more probable that the term denotes him as the object of desire. Cf. also Gen. xlix. 10; Isa. xl. 10; lix. 20; Hag. ii. 8.

† *See* Stier for what may be said in favour of the rendering of Luther, the LXX. and Jerome.

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V. 28, 29. The resolution of thanksgiving, which seems, as it were, to grow out of the preceding exhortation, is followed by the invitation which stands at the commencement of this sublime psalm.

PSALM CXIX.

A PSALM of praise in celebration of the law. The Masorites notice that, verse 122 excepted, the law, the word, or the testimony are mentioned in every verse, (cf. however, verse 132.) There is no connection between the verses, since the psalm is composed in the order of the Hebrew alphabet. (*See* foot-note to Introd. to Ps. xiv.) But that outward form of consecutive order is no more exclusive of a deeper current of feeling than is the constraint of rhyme with which modern poets fetter their compositions. Verse 176 testifies to the deep feeling and humility of the author. The whole psalm is pervaded by a profound sense of the sublimity of the Divine law, in connection with a sense of personal unworthiness. Though repetitions occur in some verses, and others correspond to the expressions of other psalms, yet there are those which contain peculiar and touching thoughts which especially adapt them for texts of sermons. We confine ourselves to a summary of the leading thoughts on the law.*

The Psalmist expresses his estimate of the *law*, verse 105—a feeling which, since he uttered it, has been re-echoed by myriads of human hearts. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path," (cf. v. 59.) The law of God is to him not only the object of idle contemplation, nor an instruction in outward ceremonies, but a *practical counsellor* for every circumstance and emergency of life: so he calls in verse 24 the testimonies of God the *men of his counsel.* It would be impossible for him to recognize in the law such a dominion over his life, and such a corrector, if he did not regard it as the *eternal word of God*, (v. 89, 90. 96. 152. 160.) That word governs the world. "It continueth this day according to thy word: for all are thy servants," (v. 91.) What a theme for a sermon! He especially recommends the saving doctrine of the law to *young men*, who while they are most easily developed and trained, are also easily deluded and led astray. The beautiful words of verse 9 have been the polar star on the path of life to multitudes of young men. His acquaintance with the legislator of those commandments fills him with holy fear.

* Most passages are remembered by every child. *It is the most beautiful mark of the excellency of a doctrine when it instructs a child.—Herder.*

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"My flesh trembleth for fear of thee: and I am afraid of thy judgments," (v. 120.) He has experienced that this legislator has instituted his laws not for the benefit of himself, but for the welfare of man, and, in language similar to Psalm xix. 8—11, he praises with a rare heartiness the blessing of his possessing those commandments; he calls them his treasure, (v. 56,) now more precious than gold and silver, (v. 72. 127. 162,) now his peculiar portion and heritage, (v. 57. 111.) The more he gets acquainted with them, the more he learns that the fear of the Lord is the greatest wisdom and best sagacity, (cf. Psalm cxi. 10.) He speaks of the *wondrous things* which he beholds in the law, (v. 18. 27.) The word of God has been his best comfort in affliction, (v. 28. 50. 92,) while trouble and humiliation have led him to that knowledge which remains concealed to the majority of men, (v. 67. 71. 75.) In the possession of that knowledge he knows himself wiser than his teachers and the ancients, (v. 99, 100.) He knows no greater grief than to see others break the law, and does all in his power that his open avowal of the law shall lead men to acknowledge its dignity and honour, (v. 136. 139. 158. 46. 109.) This exposes him to the necessary consequence of persecution, but cannot move him from his position, (v. 61. 157. 161.) The more he experiences shame and hostility at the hands of the despisers of God, the greater becomes his zeal and striving to commune with those that fear the Lord, (v. 63. 79.)

ALEPH.

1 BLESSED *are* the undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD.
2 Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies,
And that seek him with the whole heart.
3 They also do no iniquity:
They walk in his ways.
4 Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently.
5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!
6 Then shall I not be ashamed,
When I have respect unto all thy commandments.
7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart,
When I shall have learned the judgments of thy righteousness.
8 I will keep thy statutes:
O forsake me not utterly.

BETH.

9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

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10 With my whole heart have I sought thee:
O let me not wander from thy commandments.
11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
That I might not sin against thee.
12 Blessed *art* thou, O LORD:
Teach me thy statutes.
13 With my lips have I declared
All the judgments of thy mouth.
14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies,
As *much as* in all riches.
15 I will meditate in thy precepts,
And have respect unto thy ways.
16 I will delight myself in thy statutes:
I will not forget thy word.

GIMEL.

17 Deal bountifully with thy servant, *that* I may live,
And keep thy word.
18 Open thou mine eyes,
That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.
19 I *am* a stranger in the earth:
Hide not thy commandments from me.
20 My soul breaketh
For the longing *that it hath* unto thy judgments at all times,
21 Thou hast rebuked the proud,
Cursed *are they* which do err from thy commandments.
22 Remove from me reproach and contempt;
For I have kept thy testimonies.
23 Princes also did sit *and* speak against me:
But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.
24 Thy testimonies also *are* my delight
And the men of my counsel.

DALETH.

25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust,
Quicken thou me according to thy word.
26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me:
Teach me thy statutes.
27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts:
So shall I talk of thy wondrous works.
28 My soul melteth for heaviness:
Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

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29 Remove from me the way of lying:
And grant me thy law graciously.
30 I have chosen the way of truth:
Thy judgments have I laid *before me.*
31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies:
O LORD, put me not to shame.
32 I will run the way of thy commandments,
When thou shalt enlarge (or, "comfort") my heart.

HE.

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes:
And I shall keep it *unto* the end.
34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law;
Yea, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.
35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments;
For therein do I delight.
36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,
And not to covetousness.
37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity:
And quicken thou me in thy way.
38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant,
Which *is promised* to thy fear.
39 Turn away my reproach which I fear:
For thy judgments *are* good.
40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts:
Quicken me in thy righteousness.

VAU.

41 Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD,
Even thy salvation, according to thy word,
42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me:
For I trust in thy word.
43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth;
For I have hoped in thy judgments.
44 So shall I keep thy law continually
For ever and ever.
45 And I will walk at liberty;
For I seek thy precepts.
46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings,
And will not be ashamed.
47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments,
Which I have loved.

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48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments,
which I have loved;
And I will meditate in thy statutes.

ZAIN.

49 Remember the word unto thy servant,
Upon which thou hast caused me to hope.
50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction:
For thy word hath quickened me.
51 The proud have had me greatly in derision,
Yet have I not declined from thy law.
52 I remember thy judgments of old, O LORD;
And have comforted myself.
53 Horror hath taken hold upon me
Because of the wicked that forsake thy law.
54 Thy statutes have been my songs
In the house of my pilgrimage.
55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night.
And have kept thy law.
56 This I had (or, "this was my treasure,")
Because I kept thy precepts.

CHETH.

57 *Thou art* my portion, O LORD:
I have said that I would keep thy words.
58 I entreated thy favour (or, "prayed before thy face")
with *my* whole heart:
Be merciful unto me according to thy word.
59 I thought on my ways,
And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.
60 I made haste and delayed not
To keep thy commandments.
61 The bands of the wicked have robbed me:
But I have not forgotten thy law.
62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee,
Because of thy righteous judgments.
63 I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee,
And of them that keep thy precepts.
64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy:
Teach me thy statutes.

TETH.

65 Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD,
According unto thy word.

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66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge:
For I have believed thy commandments.
67 Before I was brought low I went astray:
But now have I kept thy word.
68 Thou *art* good, and doest good;
Teach me thy statutes.
69 The proud have forged a lie against me:
But I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.
70 Their heart is as fat as grease;
But I delight in thy law.
71 *It is* good for me that I have been brought low,
That I might learn thy statutes.
72 The law of thy mouth *is* better unto me
Than thousands of gold and silver.

JOD.

73 Thy hands have made me and fashioned me:
Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.
74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me;
Because I have hoped in thy word.
75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right,
And *that* thou in faithfulness hast brought me low.
76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort,
According to thy word unto thy servant.
77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live:
For thy law *is* my delight.
78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause.
But I will meditate in thy precepts.
79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me,
And those that have known thy testimonies.
80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes;
That I be not ashamed.

CAPH.

81 My soul fainteth for thy salvation:
I hope in thy word.
82 Mine eyes fail for thy word,
Saying, When wilt thou comfort me?
83 For I am become like a bottle* in the smoke:
Yet do I not forget thy statutes.

* *I. e.* a leathern bottle.

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84 How many *are* the days of thy servant?
When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?
85 The proud have digged pits for me,
Which *are* not after thy law.
86 All thy commandments *are* faithful:
They persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.
87 They had almost consumed me upon earth;
But I forsook not thy precepts.
88 Quicken me after thy lovingkindness;
So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

LAMED.

89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.
90 Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations:
Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.
91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances:
For all *are* thy servants.
92 Unless thy law *had been* my delights,
I should then have perished in mine affliction.
93 I will never forget thy precepts:
For with them thou hast quickened me.
94 I *am* thine, save me;
For I have sought thy precepts.
95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me:
But I will consider thy testimonies.
96 I have seen an end of all perfection:
But thy commandment *is* exceeding broad (or, "continueth.")

MEM.

97 O how love I thy law!
It *is* my meditation all the day.
98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies:
For it *is* ever with me (or, "For it is my treasure for ever.")
99 I have more understanding than all my teachers:
For thy testimonies *are* my meditation.
100 I understand more than the ancients,
Because I keep thy precepts.
101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way,
That I might keep thy word.

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102 I have not departed from thy judgments:
For thou hast taught me.
103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste!
Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
104 Through thy precepts I get understanding:
Therefore I hate every false way.

NUN.

105 Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet,
And a light unto my path.
106 I have sworn, and I will perform *it*,
That I will keep thy righteous judgments.
107 I am brought low very much:
Quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.
108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD,
And teach me thy judgments.
109 My soul *is* continually in my hand;
Yet do I not forget thy law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me:
Yet I erred not from thy precepts.
111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever:
For they *are* the rejoicing of my heart.
112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway,
Even unto the end.

SAMECH.

113 I hate *vain* thoughts:
But thy law do I love,
114 Thou *art* my hiding place and my shield:
I hope in thy word.
115 Depart from me, ye evildoers:
For I will keep the commandments of my God.
116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live:
And let me not be ashamed of my hope.
117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe:
And I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.
118 Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes:
For their deceit *is* falsehood.
119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth *like* dross;
Therefore I love thy testimonies.

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120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee;
And I am afraid of thy judgments.

AIN.

121 I have done judgment and justice:
Leave me not to mine oppressors.
122 Be surety for thy servant for good:
Let not the proud oppress me.
123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation,
And for the word of thy righteousness,
124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy,
And teach me thy statutes.
125 I *am* thy servant; give me understanding,
That I may know thy testimonies.
126 *It is* time for *thee*, LORD, to work,
For they have made void thy law.
127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold;
Yea, above fine gold.
128 Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things to be* right;
And I hate every false way.

PE.

129 Thy testimonies *are* wonderful:
Therefore doth my soul keep them.
130 The entrance of thy words giveth light;
It giveth understanding unto the simple.
131 I opened my mouth, and panted:
For I longed for thy commandments.
132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me,
As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name
133 Order my steps in thy word:
And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.
134 Deliver me from the oppression of man:
So will I keep thy precepts.
135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;
And teach me thy statutes.
136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,
Because they keep not thy law.

TZADDI.

137 Righteous *art* thou, O LORD,
And upright *are* thy judgments.

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138 Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded
Are righteous and very faithful.
139 My zeal hath consumed me,
Because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.
140 Thy word *is* very pure:
Therefore thy servant loveth it.
141 I *am* small and despised:
Yet do not I forget thy precepts.
142 Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness,
And thy law *is* the truth.
143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me:
Yet thy commandments *are* my delights.
144 The righteousness of thy testimonies *is* everlasting:
Give me understanding, and I shall live.

KOPH.

145 I cried with *my* whole heart; hear me, O LORD:
I will keep thy statutes.
146 I cried unto thee; save me,
That I may keep thy testimonies.
147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried:
I hoped in thy word.
148 Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches,
That I might meditate in thy word.
149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness:
O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.
150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief:
They are far from thy law.
151 Thou *art* near, O LORD:
And all thy commandments *are* truth.
152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old
That thou hast founded them for ever.

RESH.

153 Consider mine affliction, and deliver me:
For I do not forget thy law.
154 Plead my cause, and deliver me:
Quicken me according to thy word.
155 Salvation *is* far from the wicked:
For they seek not thy statutes.
156 Great *are* thy tender mercies, O LORD:
Quicken me according to thy judgments.
157 Many *are* my persecutors and mine enemies;
Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies;

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158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved:
Because they kept not thy word.
159 Consider how I love thy precepts:
Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.
160 Thy word *is* true *from* the beginning:
And every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for ever.

SCHIN.

161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause:
But my heart standeth in awe of thy word.
162 I rejoice at thy word,
As one that findeth great spoil.
163 I hate and abhor lying:
But thy law do I love.
164 Seven times a day do I praise thee
Because of thy righteous judgments.
165 Great peace have they which love thy law:
And they shall have no stumbling-block.
166 LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation,
And done thy commandments.
167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies;
And I love them exceedingly.
168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies:
For all my ways *are* before thee.

TAU.

169 Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD:
Give me understanding according to thy word.
170 Let my supplication come before thee:
Deliver me according to thy word.
171 My lips shall utter praise,
When thou hast taught me thy statutes.
172 My tongue shall speak of thy word:
For all thy commandments *are* righteousness.
173 Let thine hand help me;
For I have chosen thy precepts.
174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD;
And thy law *is* my delight.
175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee;
And let thy judgments help me.
176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant;
For I do not forget thy commandments.

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PSALM CXX.

LUTHER renders the title of the following fifteen short psalms, "A Song from the higher choir." The words in the original mean, "A Song of steps," and the translator has concluded from that term, that they were sung from a higher, more elevated place, as it were a choir, to secure their being more distinctly heard.* The meaning of that title is, however, not yet established; the common view that they are songs which were sung on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem is beset with many objections.

This psalm is the song of a man in affliction, who experiences calumny and disquietude among strangers.

A SONG from the higher choir.

1 In my distress I cried unto the LORD,
And he heard me.
2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips,
And from a deceitful tongue.
3 What shall be given unto thee?
Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?
4 *It is as the* sharp arrows of the mighty,
With coals of juniper.
5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech,
That I dwell in the tents of Kedar!
6 My soul hath long dwelt
With him that hateth peace.
7 *I am for* peace: but when I speak,
They *are* for war.

V. 1, 2. The Psalmist is so familiar with the ways of God that he is able to preface his complaints with the confession that he supplicates a prayer-hearing God. He then specifies his troubles: they are pains caused by unjust calumniations. Undaunted believers are never free from them.

V. 3, 4. He cannot refrain from uttering an imprecation against that false tongue, which prepares cutting pain like sharp arrows, and lasting pain like the coals of the broom or juniper tree, which are said to retain the heat for weeks and months together.

V. 5—7. He mentions the remote nations of the Moschian mountains along the Caspian Sea and of the tent-dwelling Arabs,

* Luther's Works, Ed. Walch. iv. 2387. c.

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as we should mention the Turks and Tartars if we wished to describe barbarian nations. He is retained against his will in that rude and hostile fellowship, and finds himself unable to silence their discord by the most conscientious effort on his part not to provoke them. Paul, in exhorting us to live peaceably with all men, foreseeing that it does not entirely depend on *ourselves*, adds, "if it be possible," and "as much as lieth in you." (Rom. xii. 18.) However difficult his unwilling residence amidst such uncongenial elements may have been, and however long it might have seemed to him, yet it may be inferred from verse 1, that he bore without murmuring or despairing the delay of Divine aid, and looked trustfully into the future.

PSALM CXXI.

A PSALM of consolation, which promises to those who seek aid from the Lord alone, the fulness and comfort of his protection.

A SONG from the higher choir.

First Choir.

1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
From whence cometh my help.*
2 My help cometh from the LORD,
Which made heaven and earth.

Second Choir.

3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.
4 Behold he that keepeth Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.
5 The LORD *is* thy keeper:
The LORD *is* thy shade upon thy right hand.
6 The sun shall not smite thee by day,
Nor the moon by night.
7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil:
He shall preserve thy soul:
8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in
From this time forth, and even for evermore.

* Or perhaps more correctly, "Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills? Whence shall my help come?"

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V. 1. The common translation of this verse suggests the idea that an afflicted person, remote from the holy land, looks longingly towards its distant hills. The hills must then be regarded as those of Zion, from which, though destroyed, the bard still expects deliverance. The expected help from the hills must also be the same which in the sequel he calls the help from the Lord. If the former half of this verse be, however, read as a question, "Shall I lift up mine eyes unto the hills? Whence should my help come?"* we have then the thought that a people besieged in a fortress look for help into the distance, (Nah. ii. 2,) which help would first appear on the mountain summit. According to this view the Psalmist reproves himself for looking out for earthly help, to give greater prominence to the thought that his only aid is with the Creator of heaven and earth.

V. 4—6. The Divine Amen to that confidence is added in sweet and figurative language. The weak in faith are prone to imagine, at the delay of Divine deliverance, that God, after the manner of human watchmen, and in spite of the office he has undertaken, is asleep. But that can never apply to the keeper of Israel. (Gen. xxviii. 15; Isaiah xxvii. 3; Deut. xxxii. 10.) He who has led the people of his inheritance from the days of their youth, as an eagle leadeth her young, spread his wings over them and kept them as the apple of his eye, (Deut. xxxii. 10, 11,) will assuredly stand as a keeper by the side of those who ignore every other aid save that of the Lord; he will be to them as a cooling shade in the heat of noon; as a defender in battle, so that neither the sun, nor the moon, nor day, nor night, shall do them any harm. The Psalmist's reference to the moon is probably a parallelism,† though the allusion may be to the heavy and injurious night dews of the East.

V. 7, 8. A general blessing succeeds the promise. The terms, "going out," and "coming in," embrace, according to the Old Testament phraseology, every act of the vocation of life. (Deut. xxviii. 6; xxxi. 2; 2 Sam. iii. 25.)

PSALM CXXII.

A PSALM which was sung on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The inhabitants of the provincial towns used to proceed in caravans to Jerusalem, singing psalms. This may be inferred from Luke ii.

* So Venema, Ewald.

† By the association of Ideas: cf. *Hitzig* ad. Isa. xiii. 10. *Umbreit*, "The moonshine shall not prevent sleep."

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41. 44. Since the psalms of degree belong mostly to the exile and a later day,* and since in the days of David there was no sanctuary at Gibeon, (cf. ad. Ps. xv.) it may be doubted whether those processions to Jerusalem were instituted so early, and whether this song does not belong to a later period. But the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were doubtless the sanctuary κατ' ἐξοχήν, and David was anxious to make Jerusalem the capital of his kingdom; it is, therefore, not altogether improbable that he instituted the annual processions to Zion.† This view is supported by the fact, that after Solomon the reference could no longer be to the processions *of the tribes of Israel*, but only to those of the *two* tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Still less could *the* tribes be mentioned *after* the *exile*, nor could the thrones of judgment of the house of David. If David is the author of this psalm, he composed it, like many others, for the use of the pious of his nation.

A SONG of David from the higher choir.

1 I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the LORD,
2 Our feet shall stand
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem.
3 Jerusalem is builded
As a city that is compact together:
4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD;
It is a law to Israel
To give thanks unto the name of the LORD.
5 For there are set thrones of judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.
6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
They shall prosper that love thee.
7 Peace be within thy walls,
And prosperity within thy palaces.
8 For my brethren and companions' sakes,
I will now say, Peace *be* within thee.
9 Because of the house of the LORD our God
I will seek thy good.

V. 1, 2. The Psalmist reverts to the beginning of his festive pilgrimage, to the moment when friends and relatives invite him to it. The thought of it is a thought of delight. His longing mind overleaps the intermediate space, and he sees himself with the pilgrims within the gates of Jerusalem.

* Even De Wette refers Psalm cxxxii. to the days of Solomon.

† Compare the longing with which Psalm lxxxiii. speaks of the pilgrimage to the sanctuary.

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V. 3. The first object of the pilgrims' astonishment is the extent of the city, where one house is built close to the other, while gardens and open spaces intervene between the buildings in smaller places. This is the most common view, but a modern expositor, remarks that this meaning is cold.* Going back to David's time we may translate, "That is compact together," and interpret as follows. *Before* David, Jerusalem consisted of two parts, the castle, held by the Jebusites, and the remaining portion of the city. David conquered Zion, and no doubt connected those portions of the city, as he afterwards connected by bridges Mount Zion and Mount Moriah. It is said, 2 Sam. v. 9, that David built round about from Millo (the city of Zion) and inward (which may, however, equally apply to fortifications.) The astonishment at the *extent* of the city, which was effected by the established junction of the different parts, would therefore be explained.

V. 4, 5. The thought rises from the outward beauty of the city to its inward dignity. It is the city to which, according to an ancient and now renewed law, the tribes go up to worship: it is the city where the house of David administers the civil law: it is the centre of religion and of the state. The thrones are the judgment-seats of the kings. (1 Kings xxii. 10; Jer. xxxviii. 7.) But why speak in the plural? Perhaps because such seats were erected before the gates, (cf. Michaelis' Mosaic Law, i. sec. 57,) where judgment took place. (Psalm cxxvii. 5; Amos v. 10. 12.) It is but natural that David speaks of his *house*. (Cf. 2 Sam. vii. 16; iii. 1; Psalm xviii. 51.)

V. 6—9. David loved Zion, and therefore built a house of the Lord, and because he had built there a house of the Lord, his heart became still more attached to it. He therefore prays for her peace and prosperity within and without, in her walls and palaces, both for her inhabitants' sake and the house of the Lord, which was the glory of Jerusalem and the joy of David. (Ps. xxiii. 6, *etc.*)

PSALM CXXIII.

A PRAYER of the whole nation in a condition of long-continued humiliation.

A SONG from the higher choir.

1 Unto thee lift I up mine eyes,
O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

* Gesenius Thes. S. V. דובר

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2 Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters,
And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress;
So our eyes *wait* upon the LORD our God,
Until that he have mercy upon us.
3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us:
For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.
4 Our soul is exceedingly filled
With the scorning of those that are at ease,
And with the contempt of the proud.

V. 1. The Psalmist directs his prayer and intercession to God, like a man who feels the degradation of his people as his own, and is himself greatly visited by it. The Psalmists are wont to call God *their God*, for their peculiar comfort, just at the time when no ray of hope is visible on earth; so here the Psalmist addresses the Lord, who *dwelleth in the heavens*. He is sure that the attacks of men cannot hurt the Lord, that the sceptre of his might is unbroken, and that his eyes reach as far as the heavens.

V. 2. Men but rarely escape the temptation of looking out for human help when they are in trouble, but the Psalmist here solemnly declares that he and his people are fixedly gazing upon the hand of the Omnipotent, from whom all the powerful on earth have received and are daily receiving their power, all the wise their wisdom, and all helpers the strength to help.* While such a fixed gaze upon the Lord gives to *him* his due honour, it yields to *man* continued peace and moderation. While we look to human hands for help, hope and fear alternate; but if they, who may be sure of a gracious God, look to his hands, confidence is sure to ensue.

V. 3, 4. These verses seem to intimate that contempt had been carried on for some time past, and that the faith of the servants of God had stood a long trial. This renders the perseverance of verse 2 the more astonishing. They had *got tired* of suffering: we need not much to get so. This short and hearty psalm contains, however, not the expression of passionate impatience, but rather of believing moderation.

PSALM CXXIV.

A BRIEF but powerful song of praise, like many psalms of David in the first book. Some, though on insufficient grounds, have

* Savary, Letters on Egypt, p. 185:—"The slaves, having their hands crossed on their chest, stand silently at the end of the hall. *With their eyes fastened on their master*, they seek to anticipate his every wish."

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regarded it as a fragment which, after the exile, was used by the pilgrims on their processions.

The first verses possess peculiar energy, from the repetition of the former clause in verses 1 and 2, and the accumulation of images in the after clauses. Verse 7 announces the victory with joyous vivacity—a victory under circumstances when every hope of deliverance seemed to have fled. Verse 8 expresses the confession and vow that he to whom everything must obey, because he has made everything, should be the sole help and consolation of Israel. Now if the Israel, who on account of that experience could sing this song of praise, continues now in the assembly of the redeemed of the Lord Jesus Christ, then has the ancient song of praise, like many others, been transferred from the past to the present: the Church of Christ shall experience the same deliverance, and sing the same songs of praise.

A SONG of David from the higher choir.

1 If *it had not been* the LORD who was on our side,
Now may Israel say;
2 If *it had not been* the LORD who was on our side,
When men rose up against us:
3 Then they had swallowed us up quick,
When their wrath was kindled against us:
4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us,
The stream had gone over our soul:
5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.
6 Blessed *be* the LORD,
Who hath not given us *as* a prey to their teeth.
7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers:
The snare is broken, and we are escaped.
8 Our help is in the name of the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.

PSALM CXXV.

THIS psalm of prayer and consolation points to a time when the "rod of the wicked" ruled over Israel, and when many of the people were seduced by oppression or bad example to make fellowship with the wicked. The rod of the wicked most probably denotes the power of heathen oppressors, (Ps. xciv. 20;) then "the righteous

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that put forth their hands unto iniquity" are either those who support the oppression of heathen despots, or those who get seduced to idolatry.

The Psalmist, having confidently proclaimed the termination of the heathen rule, (v. 1—3,) supplicates God to bless the faithful of his people, but to adequately punish the rebels, (v. 4, 5.)

A SONG from the higher choir.

1 They that trust in the LORD *shall be* as Mount Zion,
Which cannot be removed, *but* abideth for ever.
2 *As* the mountains *are* round about Jerusalem,
So the LORD *is* round about his people
From henceforth even for ever.
3 For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot (or, "small band") of the righteous;
Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.
4 Do good, O LORD, unto *those that be* good,
And to *them that are* upright in their hearts.
5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways,
The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity:
But peace *shall be* upon Israel.

V. 1, 2. Not less firm than Zion, the mount of God, are they who put their trust in the Lord of that sanctuary. The mountains which encircle Jerusalem symbolize the high protection with which God encircles his people, a protection as immovable as their foundations. (Zech. ii. 5.) In speaking of the eternal duration of Mount Zion, the Psalmist contemplates not the mountain as such, but regards it as the centre of the kingdom of God, whence the Messianic salvation proceeds, (Isa. ii. 3,) and which in that sense may be called imperishable. The very psalm which celebrates the removal of the ark from Zion to Moriah declares that the Lord shall dwell for ever in Zion. (Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14.)

V. 3. This verse applies the confidence expressed in the preceding verses. The Psalmist complains of the long-continued oppression of the people of God. In describing God as the eternal protection of his people, he by no means intimated thereby that he would exempt them from trial and affliction. The promise is not exemption from stumbling, but exemption from falling. God will not forget his covenant, nor punish beyond measure. (Ps. xxxvii. 24; xciv. 18.) The noncontinuance of the rod of the wicked is the consolation of the Psalmist.

V. 4, 5. This passage renders it clear that the Psalmist includes

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not in the terms, "the people of God" and "Israel," those who carnally belong to them, for he expressly implores blessings for the small band of the upright in heart, while those who walk in crooked paths shall be driven away with the ungodly. The reference is here as elsewhere, (Psalm lxxiii. 1; xiv. 4,) to the true Israel. For them he desires peace. The same remarks apply to the final verses of Psalms cxxviii. cxxx. cxxxi.

PSALM CXXVI.

THIS psalm belongs to that period after the captivity, when internal troubles and external hostilities pressed upon the nation. Cf. the account furnished in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and the introduction to Psalm lxxxv., which was composed under similar circumstances.

The Psalmist praises the past dealings of God in the happy recollection of the delights which they felt on returning from the captivity, (v. 1—3.) He prays for the further manifestation of Divine help, and derives comfort from the knowledge that tears and sorrows lead to joy, (v. 4—6.)

A SONG from the higher choir.

1 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion,
We were like them that dream.
2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the heathen,
The LORD hath done great things for them.
3 The LORD hath done great things for us;
Whereof we are glad.
4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the south.
5 They that sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.
6 He that goeth forth and weepeth,
Bearing precious seed,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
Bringing his sheaves *with him.*

V. 1—3. When things which we deem incredible come eventually to pass, we are prone to regard them as dreams and not as

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realities. The prophets had predicted the measure of Divine punishment. (Jer. xxix. 10; xxv. 12.) Yet their deliverance, when it came, appeared to the people as a blissful dream. In proportion to the incredibility of that event would have been their guilt in denying the Omnipotent as the originator thereof. The Psalmist testifies, however, that the rejoicings of the delivered were not confined to what they saw, but that they ascribed appropriate praise and glory to the Lord in heaven. How could they do otherwise when even the blind heathens had their eyes opened and cried: "The Lord hath done great things for them." Indeed there is something so marvellous in the determination of King Cyrus to suffer a great people, who had settled in his country and filled it with prosperity, to depart from his borders, that the learned confess themselves unable to satisfactorily account for the motives of the king of Persia, and not a few of them assume that he must have had some kind of faith in the God of the Israelites.* The Psalmist gratefully repeats in the name of the people, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." Though he has grounds for complaint, he is unwilling to fail in the duty of thanksgiving for mercies already received.

V. 4—6. It has been shown in the notes to Psalm xiv. 7,† that the expression, "to turn the captivity," is in the Old Testament figuratively employed for the turning of every kind of misery. Narrowed in the means requisite for the building of the new city, assailed by the surrounding heathen nations, who interfered with the erection of the temple and calumniated them to the king of Persia, the Israelites who had returned from the captivity had sufficient ground to implore further assistance from the Lord. The country is as it were like an arid desert. The Psalmist prays that the Lord would treat it like the streams in the waste land in the south of Palestine, which dry up in summer, but get refilled with water in autumn and spring. (Job vi. 15.) In this prayer the Psalmist derives strength from the hope which has met innumerable fulfilments in the kingdom of nature and in history, but especially in the experience of the children of God. (Heb. xii. 11.) The sower casts his seed if not in tears, yet in the sweat of his brow, but when the merry time of harvest comes, all is joy and gladness. The combat leads to victory, sorrows to joy, death to life. Our Lord expresses the same truth by another figure. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." That truth cheers the Psalmist in the prospect of the future; though as he says in verses 1, 2, the past has already confirmed it to him. (Jer. xxxi. 9.) This passage is applicable to suffering Christians; either to their strug-

* Cf. The decree of Cyrus, Ezra i.

† Cf. Psalm lxxxv. 5, in the Hebrew.

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gles this side the grave or their triumphs beyond; the first verses of the passage are also explained either of the joy of the redeemed on earth or of their entrance upon the bliss of eternity. Augustin interprets the title, "A Song of Degrees, *i. e.* a Song of drawing upwards," of the drawing (going) up to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is right, inasmuch as the deliverance from the captivity of sin and death should in an increased measure excite those feelings of gratitude which Israel must have felt on being delivered from their corporeal captivity; in this respect again is the history of the outward theocracy a type of the history of the Church. Luther says, "Let us overlook the peculiar prisons (*i. e.* with respect to the Babylonish captivity,) and explain this psalm of the common prison and deliverance of the entire human race."

PSALM CXXVII.

THIS beautiful psalm is the other one which is preserved of Solomon. (Cf. Psalm lxxii.) Its pious wisdom of life is peculiarly consonant with the early life of Solomon. Luther, "We see that Solomon instructs us in the things which are needed for the preservation of governments (political or domestic,) and that he seldom treats of the subject which so much engaged the attention of his father, namely, "righteousness." We read, Prov. x. 22, "The blessing of the Lord maketh rich without trouble;" xvi. 9, "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps;" and, viii. 15, wisdom says, "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice." Cf. Eccl. ix. 11; viii. 16.*

A SONG of Solomon from the higher choir.

1 Except the LORD build the house,
They labour in vain that build it:
Except the LORD keep the city,
The watchman waketh *but* in vain.
2 *It is* vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late,
To eat the bread of sorrows:
For he giveth *it* to his beloved *while* asleep.
3 Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD:
And the fruit of the womb *is his* reward.

* Cf. the linguistic comparisons of *Stier* ad. loc.

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4 As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man;
So *are* children of the youth.
5 Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them:
They shall not be ashamed,*
When they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

V. 1, 2. Although there is nothing more certain than that the ability of man depends on the supplies from the inexhaustible treasure-house of the Lord, and the success of man on the combination of outward circumstances which are beyond the control of mortals, yet those who are not yet convinced that "we live, and move, and have our being" in God, are ever inclined to look upon themselves as the originators of their prosperity. The design of this psalm is to reprove that ungrateful and proud idolatry. Men build and keep watch, but if they do it without God it is all in vain. The term "house" may be interpreted as "household" or "family," but it is better to regard it as a literal house, since afterwards the *city* is mentioned. The term "watchman," however, seems to have a more extensive meaning, (as Ps. cxxx. 6;) it applies to all who are responsible for the prosperity of a city, such as the magistrates and councillors. The prophets are called "watchmen" in the Old Testament. (Isa. lii. 8; Ezek. iii. 17.)

V. 3. Having stated in general terms the futility of man's efforts without God, the Psalmist now addresses those for whom his remarks are designed, to point out to them still more particularly that effort and anxiety alone are not enough; for many seek to account for the failures of men, by saying that they have not *sufficiently exerted themselves.* The last clause of this verse has been much ridiculed by the careless, as if it were favouring a pious aversion to labour, and even Luther has fallen into a misapprehension in interpreting "the sleep" as "peace of conscience." But from what precedes, it is evident that Solomon's meaning is tantamount to the old proverb, "Everything depends on the blessing of God;" or as P. Gerhard has it, "You cannot take anything from God by care and anxiety—you must pray for it." Should any one, however, feel inclined to force the passage, let him do so, but bear in mind "that it is given to the *beloved of God* while they are asleep;" but those who pretend to be the beloved of God must not forget that though it is true that the Lord can and does give it to his people while they are asleep, yet there is also the injunction of the apostle, "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." (2 Thess. iii. 10.)

V. 4. The Psalmist now illustrates by a most forcible example how everything depends on the blessing of God. Is there any-

* Or, "Their fathers shall not be ashamed."

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thing of greater moment in a household, after toiling, care, and anxiety have had their due weight, than the *possession of children?* People are very rarely heard to say that God has not given them a wife or a fortune, though even the ungodly will thoughtlessly observe that the *Lord* has given or refused them *children*. It is said in Genesis, where the fruitfulness of matrimony is the theme, "God blessed them." Thus we are wont to call children *the blessing of matrimony*. This one instance must render it patent to the most blind, that with all our efforts and cares, *prosperity* depends on the secret influence of God.

V. 5, 6. The Psalmist takes occasion to depict the excellency of the blessing of children. A number of grown up children, begot in the strength of youth, are like so many protecting weapons in the assault and the defence, like arrows shot by a strong and expert archer. Happy is the man who has the quiver of his house full of them! Such fathers are blessed even in the judgment when they treat with their enemies in the gate, (*see* ad. Psalm cxxii. 5;) their sons become their spokesmen. "While he lived" (the father of a well-trained son) "he saw and rejoiced in him: and when he died, he was not sorrowful. He left behind him an avenger against his enemies, and one that shall requite kindness to his friends." (Sir. xxx. 5, 6.)

PSALM CXXVIII.

A PSALM which celebrates the blessing of domestic piety. Luther calls it a *wedding-song* for Christians. The impressiveness of the psalm arises from the Psalmist's addressing himself to his readers personally.

A SONG from the higher choir.

1 Blessed *is* every one that feareth the LORD;
That walketh in his ways.
2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands:
Happy *shalt* thou *be*, and *it shall be* well with thee.
3 Thy wife *shall be* as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house:
Thy children like olive plants round about thy table.
4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed
That feareth the LORD,
5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion:
And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

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6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children,
And peace upon Israel.

V. 1. The fear of God flows like a fertilising stream over the temporal existence of men. The Psalmist rightly praises it as the only solid foundation for a happy household.

V. 2. The first promise respects the blessing of *nourishment*, the second that of *matrimony*, the third that of *children*. While mere early rising and sitting up late are not sufficient in the case of the ungodly, (Ps. cxxvii. 2,) moderate exertion will, by the blessing of God, secure the wants of those who fear the Lord. The promises of the Scriptures seem to speak of supernatural blessings flowing through invisible channels, and it cannot be denied that the ways by which the blessing of God flows into a Christian household, and causes it to prosper, are frequently concealed from our view. It is, however, only natural that the fear of God, in rendering men moderate, contented, honest, and diligent, must ever prove the source of prosperity in every vocation of life. Add to this, that those who work in faith and love are joyful and easy workers. May it, therefore, not be said that the fear of God in part at least removes that curse from labour which ushered it into the world? (Gen. iii. 17.)

V. 3. Why rejoices man in the blessing of a prospering work? If he has to reap its benefits alone, his joy is scanty and silent; he should like to extend them to a house, to spread a table, that they who are one flesh and blood with him should share the reward of his toils. Thus the Psalmist considers the second and third blessings. He compares the wife and the children to the two noble plants, the vine and the olive tree, from which the most choice liquids are obtained. He refers the wife to the interior of the house, because her proper domain is there, and not in the streets and market-places; the children he describes as seated at the table, because they appear peculiarly pleasant when they look up to their father's hand, and joyously consume the food before them. He compares the wife to the vine, the clusters of which no less rejoice the eye than their juice gladdens the heart; it is a plant which needs support, extremely delicate, and yet bearing such strong fruit. He may probably have thought that the children, the fruit of her body, cling to her, numerous and beautiful, as the grapes to the vine. He compares the children to olive branches, not on account of their beauty, but on account of their great number in the tree and the excellency of their fruit.

V. 4. 6. The blessing having been pronounced in the third person, is now addressed in a direct form to those who fear the Lord. After the removal of the ark from Mount Zion, the name of Zion used to denote the sanctuary of God, and Jerusalem itself the centre thereof. (Ps. xx. 3.) He who has built his *house* in

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the fear of God cannot but rejoice in the building and flourishing of the *city* of God. Such a building of houses in the fear of God is the most efficient means towards the good of Jerusalem. Since men regard the continuance of their own lives in those of their offspring as a peculiar blessing, and frequently are more concerned for the welfare of their children than their own, the Psalmist holds out a long posterity. The Israel which is praised here must be the true Israel, for it is the condition of the godly which is praised. (*See* ad. Ps. CXXV. 5.)

PSALM CXXIX.

A PSALM of complaint. It belongs to a period when many calamities having passed over the nation, the Lord had graciously removed their last affliction as he had their former, (v. 4.) To this is annexed an imprecation on all the enemies of Zion.

A SONG from the higher choir.

1 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth,
May Israel now say:
2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth:
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
3 The ploughers ploughed upon my back:
They made long their furrows.
4 The LORD *is* righteous:
He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.
5 Let them all be counfounded and turned back
That hate Zion.
6 Let them be as the grass *upon* the housetops,
Which withereth afore it groweth up:
7 Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand;
Nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.
8 Neither do they which go by say,
"The blessing of the LORD be upon you:
We bless you in the name of the LORD."

V. 1—4. The Psalmist exhorts his nation to the contemplation of their afflictions from the days of their youth, *i. e.* the exode from Egypt to the present hour, since the believing consideration of past affliction and past deliverance is most conducive to courageous

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perseverance. Their wounds had been deep: the plough had as it were gone over their backs, and left long furrows behind it. Yet the end has always been this: *they have not prevailed against me.* When the seed falls into deep furrows, it will yield fruit, and the Lord cut asunder the cords of their yoke whenever the people were yielding the desired fruit.

V. 5—8. In view of the long ranks of the enemies of Zion, the desire arises that they might all be put to shame: so Christians, though constrained to own that the sufferings of the Church are a capital crucible for the separation of her dross, can hardly suppress the desire that the enemies of the Church of God should cease. The imprecation of the Psalmist is no other judgment than that which arises from the condition of the enemies of the Church. They have no root, like the grass on the earth-covered roofs of the houses of the poor in the East; it is a poor crop, and does not deserve the salutation which used to be addressed to the mowers, "The Lord be with you." (Ruth ii. 4.)

PSALM CXXX.

A PSALM of complaint in deep sorrow, (v. 1—4,) but full of confidence and encouragement for Israel, (v. 5—8.)

A SONG from the higher choir.

1 Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.
2 Lord, hear my voice:
Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.
3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,
O LORD, who shall stand?
4 But *there is* forgiveness with thee,
That thou mayest be feared.
5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait,
And in his word do I hope.
6 My soul *waiteth* for the Lord
More than they that watch for the morning:
That watch for the morning.
7 Let Israel hope in the LORD:
For with the LORD *there is* mercy,
And with him *is* plenteous redemption.
8 And he shall redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.

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V. 1—4. As a cry for help is heard from an abyss, so the troubled bard sends his cry from earth to heaven. He complains not, as most men do, of *undeserved* suffering, nor asks, Why happens this to *me?* why happens this to *me?* He rather confesses that all men ought to consider all their sufferings as the well deserved punishment of their sins, and asserts that if the sins of men were adequately punished, they could not stand before God. He holds the evangelical doctrine of the New Testament, by declaring according to Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, that the existence and prosperity of sinners are only possible because of Divine forgiveness, and that God exerts forgiveness for the very purpose of kindling the fear of God in a more vivid and powerful manner. (Psalm cxliii. 2.)

V. 5—8. Confiding in the true word of the Lord and the surety of his promises, (Psalm xxxiii. 4; lvi. 11,) he trains himself in perseverance. His soul waits upon God, as watchmen look out for the light of day in a dark night. (Isa. xxi. 11.) The confidence which has cheered his own heart animates him to exhort all the associates of his nation to bear in mind that God deals with us not according to our deserts but according to his mercy. We may therefore expect much and even new redemption at his hands, till it shall be completed at last, when the true Israel of God shall be redeemed from *all* their sins and their melancholy consequences.

PSALM CXXXI.

A PSALM of David, which sets forth the confession of his calm resignation to the will of God. Some think that it is descriptive of David's readiness not prematurely to desire the throne of Saul. But there are many other circumstances to be conceived, which could have occasioned this brief but charming psalm.

A SONG of David from the higher choir.

1 LORD, my heart is not haughty,
Nor mine eyes lofty;
Neither do I walk in great matters,
Or in things too high for me.
2 Surely I have behaved and quieted my soul,
As a child that is weaned of his mother:
My soul is even as a weaned child.

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3 Let Israel hope in the LORD
From henceforth and for ever.

V. 1, 2. Common experience teaches us, that the more man has, the more he desires. Hence the rich are if anything more liable than the poor, to fall into the universal temptation of being dissatisfied with what the Lord has apportioned to them, and of striving after higher things. The conduct of a victorious king, blessed with prosperity and power, who is content with what the Lord has meted out to him, demands a special acknowledgment. The Psalmist neither denies the temptation of passion nor the occasional commotion of his mind. He is afraid of the ingratitude of which he would become guilty, and the unfailing retribution of Divine justice, and has therefore succeeded to calm his soul, like the weaned infant which nestles in his mother's bosom without desire.

V. 3. Assured of the blessing of his own conduct, the Psalmist calls upon all his associates in faith to set their hope on the Lord, who in due time will grant to every one what he requires.

PSALM CXXXII.

A PSALM of supplication, which was sung at the removal of the ark from the tabernacle on Zion into the temple on Moriah. As verses 8—10 occur in the dedication prayer of Solomon, 2 Chron. vi. 41, 42, we must assume that either Solomon is the author of this psalm, or that the author of the Chronicles took that passage, which is wanting in the version of the prayer which is furnished in 1 Kings viii., from this psalm, and added it to Solomon's prayer, because he knew that the king had uttered it on that occasion.

The prayer supplicates Divine mercy, on the plea of the fidelity which David displayed in his zeal for God, and especially for the building of a *house* for the ark, (v. 1—5.) The people, having stated that the ark used formerly to wander from place to place, begin to worship, (v. 6, 7,) and pray for mercy on the sanctuary and the government, (v. 8—10.) They cite as a pledge of their confidence the word which the Lord spoke unto Nathan, (v. 11—12.) Now the Lord himself speaks, promising to dwell in Zion, to bless the provisions of the people, to give salvation to the priests, and might and victory to the royal house, (v. 13—18.)

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A SONG from the higher choir.

First Choir.

1 LORD remember David,
And all his pains.
2 How he sware unto the LORD,
And vowed unto the mighty *God* of Jacob;
3 "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,
Nor go up into my bed;
4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
Or slumber to mine eyelids,
5 Until I find out a place for the LORD,
An habitation for the mighty *God* of Jacob."

Second Choir.

6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah:
We found it in the fields of the wood.
7 We will go into his tabernacles:
We will worship at his footstool.

First Choir.

8 Arise, O LORD, into thy rest;
Thou, and the ark of thy strength.
9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness;
And let thy saints shout for joy.
10 For thy servant David's sake
Turn not away the face of thine anointed.

Second Choir.

11 The LORD hath sworn *in* truth unto David;
He will not turn from it;
Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.
12 "If thy children will keep my covenant
And my testimony that I shall teach them,
THEIR children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore."

The Two Choirs.

13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion;
He hath desired *it* for his habitation.
14 "This *is* my rest for ever:
Here will I dwell; for I have desired it.
15 I will abundantly bless her provision:
I will satisfy her poor with bread.

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16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation:
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
17 There will I make the horn of David to bud;
I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.
18 His enemies will I clothe with shame:
But upon himself shall his crown flourish."

V. 1—5. The pains of David cannot mean anything else but his varied efforts to establish the sanctuary, and to arrange and beautify its worship. As a single proof is mentioned his anxiety for the place of the ark. It is uncertain whether the adduced determination of David respects the foundation of a house for the ark (that is the building of the temple,) and the words which are put into the mouth of David are simply an expansion of the concise expression in 2 Samuel vii. 2, (Acts vii. 46,) or only expressive of his desire to prepare a permanent place for the ark on Mount Zion. Verse 6 favours the latter supposition. 2 Samuel vi. contains no further details respecting his determination to remove the ark from Kirjath Jearim, where it had been accidentally deposited. (Cf. Introd. ad. Ps. xv.) On the other hand, 1 Chronicles xiii. (xiv.) speaks of the complaint of David to the captains of Israel that the ark had not been sufficiently honoured by Saul, from which complaint we may infer the zeal with which David carried on its removal to Zion. The powerful and poetically executed expressions are still further confirmed by an oath. There is no need that they should be taken literally. (Prov. vi. 4.)

V. 6, 7. The people confirm the declaration of David, by stating to have *heard* from of old, that the ark used to be in the tribe of Ephraim, *i. e.* at Shiloh, that in their own time it was at Kirjath Jearim, *i. e.* the city of the wood, that therefore they had *found* it in a wild region, (v. 6.) Then follows an invitation to worship at the sanctuary of God. We have remarked on Psalm xcix. 5, that the visible sanctuary, and the ark in particular, was called the *footstool* of God, as an admonition that the sensible could after all be only a poor representation of the eternal.

V. 8—10. The ark approaches the sanctuary, (Numb. x. 35;) blessings always attend the entrance of the Lord. The church and the civil government are two institutions, on which the prosperity of the state and the people depend. The people implore, therefore, blessings and salvation for their priests,* and permanent dominion for their kings.

V. 11, 12. The most potent weapon with God is his own word. They remind him, therefore, as did Ethan in Psalm lxxxix. 20, *etc.* of the solemn words which he had spoken by Nathan, and which

* The Chaldee translator regards the saints as *Levites;* the reference seems hardly to the godly among the people: the Psalmist probably means the priests.

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must at that time have been still fresh in the memory of all. Solomon too made mention of those glorious words of comfort in his prayer at the dedication of the temple. (1 Kings viii. 25.)

V. 13—18. It may seem strange that the eternal resting-place of God on Zion should be spoken of at the very moment when the ark was being removed from Zion to Moriah. This objection might be set aside by the fact, that Zion and Moriah were at first separated by a gulf, but afterwards united by bridges, and could therefore be regarded as one: as in fact the gulf is now filled up, and Moriah no longer discernible as a separate hill. But it is more correct to say, that Zion stands for *Jerusalem*, as is clear from verses 15—17; and we Christians should therefore bear in mind that the ancient Israel continues in the Israel of God of the New Testament, (Gal. vi. 16,) and Zion in the Christian Church. Calvin says, "Christ has by his advent, extended Mount Zion to the ends of the earth."* The full pleasure of the Lord in this kingdom which he established according to the free resolve of his mercy, animates him to make glorious promises to people, (Psalm cxi. 5,) priest and king. On the expression "horn," see notes to Psalm cxii. 9, and on "lamp," cf. Psalm xviii. 29.

PSALM CXXXIII.

A JOYOUS and hearty psalm. Its theme is the blessing of fraternal unity among associates. Commentators regard either the union of the tribes under the sceptre of David, as the occasion of the psalm, (2 Sam. v. 3,) or the great assembly of the people during the reign of David, when Solomon was anointed as king, and Zadok as the high priest of the people. (1 Chron. xxix. [xxx.] 22.) One of the three great feasts, the passover in particular, when all the tribes met together at Jerusalem, (Psalm cxxii. 4,) may, however, have inspired David with this psalm, in praise of fraternal unity. Verse 8 alludes to a gathering in Zion.

A SONG of David from the higher choir.

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is*
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
2 *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head,
That ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard:
That went down to the skirts of his garments;

* Could the prophets have said that all the nations should flow to Zion, and that the Temple should become *the house of prayer of all nations*, if they had not regarded Zion as the symbol of the kingdom of God?

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3 As the dew of Hermon,
And as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion:
For there the LORD commanded the blessing,
Even life for evermore.

V. 1. The Psalmist calls it good and pleasant for associates of the same faith not only to preserve unity, but to express it by *dwelling* together, as it was the case when all the worshippers of the One God used to flow together to the one centre of his adoration at the annual three great feasts. The adjectives *good* and *pleasant* denote the blessedness of such a fellowship of love, based on faith.

V. 2, 3. Two beautiful figures describe the benefits resulting from such a dwelling together—the fragrant *oil of anointing* with which the high priest used to be anointed, the most sacred and fragrant of oils, (Exod. xxx. 24; xxxvii. 29; Lev. viii. 10,) as well as the *dew*, noted for its *copiousness* (*see* ad. Psalm cx. 3,) and refreshing *power*. The blessing of that fellowship is therefore *gratifying to the senses and strengthening to the heart*. It is overflowing and all-embracing, so that it bears and refreshes the very meanest. This is the meaning of the expression that the fragrant oil copiously poured upon the head, descends to the ends of the reverential beard, yea, to the skirts of the garments. The second figure applies the former to the case in hand. The Psalmist means to say, these figures are exemplified in Zion. Hermon is a very high mountain, enshrouded in clouds. The valleys at the base of such mountains have a peculiarly copious supply of dew. The dew of Hermon denotes the *most abundant* dew, which is to descend upon the community of the pious in Zion. This psalm of praise on the unity of brethren is confirmed by the statements of the New Testament respecting the glorious blessings of fraternal unity, which blessings, however, will not be completed until the completion of the kingdom of God shall have taken place. The last words of the second figure show that it has ceased to be a simile, and treats of the exemplification of the blessings of unity in Zion and the brethren there assembled. They indicate that the promise belongs to Zion. The word "*blessing*" is explained by the more pregnant term "*life*."

PSALM CXXXIV.

A SONG of praise for the Levites, who were appointed to hold the night watch in the temple.

The offices of the Levites were threefold. They officiated in holy things, conducted the singing, and guarded the temple.

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(1 Chron. xxvi. [xxvii.;] Lev. viii. 35.) The temple was guarded also during the day, to ward off the approach of unclean persons; but the watch was kept up especially at night.

This psalm and 1 Chronicles ix. (x.) 33, show that praise used to be offered at night. The coming and retiring Levites invite each other to praise by responses. Verse 3 speaks of God the Creator to denote his power, from which believers may venture to hope *everything*.

A SONG from the higher choir.

The coming Temple-guard.

1 Behold, bless ye the LORD,
All *ye* servants of the LORD,
Which by night stand in the house of the LORD.
2 Lift up your hands to the sanctuary,
And bless the LORD.

The retiring Temple-guard.

3 The LORD that made heaven and earth
Bless thee out of Zion.

PSALM CXXXV.

A SONG of praise for *all* the people, for those who stand in the courts of the temple, (v. 2.) God is worthy to be praised, for Israel is his peculiar treasure, and he is greater than all the gods, (v. 4—6.) This is seen from his government in nature, (v. 7,) no less than from the past experience and guidance of his people, (v. 8—12.) He will be merciful to his people for ever, (v. 13, 14.) The idols are soulless and powerless formations of men's hands, (v. 15—18.) Repeated invitations to praise are addressed to the people, the priests, and the Levites, (v. 19, 20.) Cf. with the last verses Psalm cxv. 8—10.

1 PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise ye the name of the LORD;
Praise *him*, O ye servants of the LORD.
2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD,
In the courts of the house of our God.

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3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD *is* good:
Sing praises unto his name; for *it is* pleasant.
4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself,
And Israel for his peculiar treasure.
5 For I know that the LORD *is* great
And *that* our LORD *is* above all gods.
6 Whatsoever the LORD pleaseth, *that* doeth he
In heaven and in earth,
In the seas, and all deep places.
7 He causeth the clouds to ascend from the ends of the earth;
He maketh lightnings for the rain;
He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries,
8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt,
Both of man and beast.
9 *Who* sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt,
Upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
10 Who smote great nations,
And slew mighty kings;
11 Sihon king of the Amorites,
And Og king of Bashan,
And all the kingdoms of Canaan:
12 And gave their land *for* an heritage,
An heritage unto Israel his people.
13 Thy name, O LORD, *endureth* for ever;
And thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.
14 For the LORD will judge his people,
And he will repent himself concerning his servants.
15 The idols of the heathen *are* silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
16 They have mouths—but they speak not;
Eyes have they—but they see not;
17 They have ears—but they hear not;
Neither is there *any* breath in their mouths.
18 They that make them are (or, "shall become") like unto them:
So is every one that trusteth in them.
19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel:
Bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:
20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi:
Ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.
21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion,
Which dwelleth at Jerusalem.
Praise ye the LORD.

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PSALM CXXXVI.

A RESPONSIVE song in praise of God, the God of gods and the Lord of lords, who has established the monuments of his miracles in nature and in the history of Israel. A second chorus always repeats the final clause, "For his mercy endureth for ever."

1 O GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good;
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
2 O give thanks unto the God of gods:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
3 O give thanks to the Lord of Lords:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
4 To him who alone doeth great wonders:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever,
5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
7 To him that made great lights:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
8 The sun to rule by day:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
9 The moon and stars to rule by night:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
11 And brought out Israel from among them:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
13 To him which divided the Red Sea into parts:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
16 To him which led his people through the wilderness:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
17 To him which smote great kings:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:

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18 And slew famous kings:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
19 Sihon king of the Amorites:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
20 And Og the king of Bashan:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
21 And gave their land for an heritage:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
22 *Even* an heritage unto Israel his servant:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
23 Who remembered us in our low estate:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
25 Who giveth food to all flesh:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

PSALM CXXXVII.

A PSALM of a Levite, a master in song. It was composed soon after the return from the captivity, when the remembrance of its ignominy was still fresh in the mind of the people.

1 BY the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down,
Yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song;
And they that wasted us *required of us* mirth,
Saying, "Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion."
4 How shall we sing the LORD'S song
In a strange land?
5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget *her cunning*.
6 If I do not remember thee,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;
If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

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7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom
In the day of Jerusalem;
Who said, "Rase *it*,
Rase *it*, *even* to the foundation thereof."
8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed (or,
"thou destroyer;")
Happy *shall he be*, that rewardeth thee
As thou hast served us.
9 Happy *shall he be*,
That taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

V. 1. The foreign land was rich and fascinating.* Many had yielded to its fascination, and preferred a permanent settlement to the granted return into their own native country. But withal the hearts of the greater portion of the people, and especially of the priests and Levites, were so powerfully attached to the sanctuary and the city of God, that joy was a stranger to them. They sat by the streams of the richly irrigated land and shed their tears into its streams.

V. 2, 3. The Levites had carried their harps, which they had so frequently strung in praise of the Lord in the temple, as precious memorials of happier days, into the land of their exile. There they sat by the water's edge in the shade of the willow-tree, but the charm of the scenery was unable to subdue their grief, and they hung their harps on the willows. The heathen seem to have heard of the joyous psalms which Israel used to sing to the Lord; they may have occasionally listened to them, and they must have been sweet to their ears. As Belshazzar wished for the vessels of the temple, so they wished for its holy songs, that they might enjoy a merry hour. If they had been able to practise their art under ordinary circumstances, it would have been utterly impossible to them to sing a *mirthful* psalm,† especially before the originators of their tribulation.

V. 4—6. This is the Psalmist's courageous reply to the strange request. They wanted them to sing remote from the place to which their harps and songs were exclusively devoted. He prizes his fair art, but he would rather that his hand should forget it and his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, than that the thought of Jerusalem should vanish from his mind. The place where he

* Compare the description which the Assyrian gives of the beauty of the land to which he intends to transplant the Jews; he probably refers to the province of Babylon.—Isa. xxxvi. 17; 2 Kings xviii. 32. But see Hitzig.

† "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart" (or, "singeth them himself.")—Prov. xxv. 20.

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used to practise it lies in ruins; Jerusalem is above his chief delights; how should he sing songs of joy within sight of her ruins?

V. 7—9. He is unable to retain any longer his intense grief for the destroyed city, as yet lying in ruins; it breaks forth into a cry of vengeance against the Edomites, who in the day when Jerusalem fell inflamed the destroyers to greater fury, and against Babylon, which because Cyrus had spared it stood as yet undestroyed. He imprecates upon their guilty heads the punitive judgments which had already been foretold by the prophets. (Obad. v. 8—16; Ezek. xxv. 12, 13; Jer. xlix. 7.) It cannot be denied that the Psalmist's language like that of Psalm cix. bears the stamp of passion; but we should remember that, according to the barbarous usage of those days, the slaughter of infants belonged to the practice of war, when a fortress had been carried by storm. (2 Kings viii. 12; Isa. xiii. 16; Nah. iii. 10.) At a much later period we find that the barbarity of the Greeks was so great, that according to Athenæus, during an insurrection the mob had the children of the rich trampled to death by oxen, and that when the aristocracy had regained their power, they ordered their enemies along with their wives and children to be cast into the flames. We owe our more civilized usages to the propagation of Gospel sentiments, which, though they have not yet brought about the abolition of war, have nevertheless by their genial beams lessened the dismal horror of its night.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

A SONG of praise full of exuberant joy. It begins with praising God for past deliverance, (v. 1—3;) rejoices in the acknowledgment of God by all the kings of the earth, (v. 4—6;) and finally expresses confidence for the future, (v. 7, 8.) No period in the history of David furnishes so appropriate an occasion for the composition of this psalm, as that of the death of Saul, which brought his ten years of affliction to an end, and transferred the sceptre into the hand of the fugitive.

A *PSALM* of David.

1 I will praise thee with my whole heart:
Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.

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2 I will worship toward thy holy temple,
And praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth ("faithfulness:")
For thou hast magnified thy word ("promise") above all thy name.
3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me,
And strengthenedst me *with* strength in my soul.
4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD,
When they hear the words of thy mouth.
5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD:
For great *is* the glory of the LORD.
6 Though the LORD *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly:
But the proud he knoweth afar off.
7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me:
Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies,
And thy right hand shall save me.
8 The LORD will perfect *that which* concerneth me:*
Thy mercy, O LORD, *endureth* for ever:
Forsake not the works of thine own hands.

V. 1—3. The Psalmist's praise of the Lord is not confined to his lips—it flows from his heart. Assured of the incomparable excellence of his God, he extols him before the gods which are the boast of the heathen. His own dwelling is insufficient for his song—he goes to the temple to celebrate the glories of his God before the assembled multitude. In other instances, the theme of the delivered is, that God has again verified his name, but in the present instance the overflowing joy of the Psalmist leads him to say, that he had exceeded the hopes he entertained of his name. His soul is not only filled with joy but with holy strength. He derives that strength from the Lord himself, which fact renders it sufficiently evident that he means to use it only against those who rebel against the Lord. "*The way of the Lord is strength to the upright.*" (Prov. x. 29.)

V. 4—6. We are not surprised that the Psalmist, overcome by the exuberance of his joy, should call upon the kings (2 Sam. v. 11, 12; viii. 11,) of the earth to become his companions in praise. These words assume the Psalmist to be a person of distinction, whose fate would attract the attention of foreign princes: so it is written of David; "And the fame of David went out into all lands: and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations." (1 Chron.

* Or, "The Lord will bring it to pass for my sake."

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xiv. 17.) His most illustrious experience, however, was, that the high exaltation of the Lord does not prevent him from mercifully looking down upon those that are humbled to the dust, nor from detecting the proud afar off.

V. 7, 8. He explains the nature of his hope of Divine deliverance. He anticipates not, as do the carnally-minded, that God would secure him against every arrow of adversity, but his hope is that the Lord, if it be his pleasure, would resuscitate him from death and lead him out of darkness into light. Confident that he has to ascribe his deliverance to Divine mercy, which mercy moreover has its foundation in the unchangeable Being of God, he commits himself into his hands for the future, and believes that he shall experience him as the same God for ever. (Phil. i. 12.)

PSALM CXXXIX.

A MAJESTIC psalm. The sacred bard begins a close self-examination with the thought of the omniscience of God, (v. 1—6,) and seeks to trace the influence of the omnipresence of God on an evil conscience, (v. 7—12.) He accounts for the naturalness of such a state of things from man's entire dependence on God, (v. 13—18.) Overcome by the strength and infinity of these thoughts he pauses —confessing before the omnipotent and omnipresent God, that he has no fellowship with the despisers of the Lord, and that he strives to walk in his ways, (v. 19—24.)

TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me.*
2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.
3 Thou winnowest my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted *with* all my ways.
4 For *there is* not a word in my tongue,
But, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
5 Thou hast beset me behind and before,
And laid thine hand upon me.
6 *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot *attain* unto it.
7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

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8 If I ascend up to heaven, thou *art* there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou *art there:*
9 *If* I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
10 Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;
Even the night shall be light about me:
12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee;*
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee.*†
13 For thou hast prepared my reins:
Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.
14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made:
Marvellous *are* thy works;
And *that* my soul knoweth right well.
15 My body was not hid from thee,
When I was made in secret,
And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
16 Thine eyes did see my substance,‡ yet being imperfect;
And in thy book all *of them* were written,
What days they should be fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.
17 How precious (or, "difficult") also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
18 *If* I should count them,
They are more in number than the sand:
When I awake, I am still with thee.
19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God:
Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.
20 For they speak against thee wickedly,
And thine enemies take *thy name* in vain.
21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee?
And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?
22 I hate them with perfect hatred:
I count them mine enemies.
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts:

* Or, "Darkness darkeneth not before thee."
† Or, "Darkness is as the light."
‡ "My embryo."

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24 And see if *there be any* wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

V. 1—6. The thought of the omniscience of God ought in every prayer to purify our souls, while that of his omnipresence ought to sanctify it. These thoughts stand in more prominent relief when a man like David seeks to fathom his heart before the Lord. Whatsoever happens to man, when he is awake or asleep, his thoughts ere they are born, his words ere they are formed on his tongue, are known to God; he is round about all his creatures; man is no more able to withdraw himself from the presence of God, than he is to visit a place where the heavens are not over him. This thought suggests to his mind the *omnipresence* of God. Who is there to grasp and fathom that Spirit who thus grasps and fathoms ours?

V. 7—12. When the guilty get conscious of the omniscience of God, their terrified conscience suggests to them, as it did to Cain, flight. But flight is vain. Neither height nor depth, neither the east nor the west, are remote from God. His discerning *spirit*, his *countenance*, and his *right hand*, are co-extensive with space, to seize the guilty fugitive. Ascend to heaven or descend to Sheol, (Amos ix. 2,) travel on the wings of the dawn, (Mal. iii. 20,) whose rosy hue is in a moment scattered from the east to the west, but all to no purpose. Space can nowhere hide the guilty. He desires to be covered with *darkness;* but to the light of the Divine eye the night is light and shines as the day. Although these revelations of the Being of God by the Psalmist set forth truths which are universally acknowledged, yet is it by no means an easy thing to have our souls so thoroughly imbued with them, and to express them after the forcible manner of David. Else how could it happen that thoughts like these, which are sufficient to rouse the profoundest sleeper, are acknowledged as truths by thousands, and yet exert so little influence upon their lives?

V. 13—15. Who can have a truer and more intimate knowledge of man than man's Maker? He knows us better than we know ourselves; we cannot hide our inner man from him. How marvellously has he made us! In the womb he prepared our bodies and reins, *i. e.* the seat of the feelings which communicate to us the voice of God. (*See* ad. Psalm xvi. 7.) There is at first sight something strange in the expression of verse 15, that the body was curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, but this is only said by way of comparison. Job furnishes the counterpart to it by saying, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return *thither*." (Job i. 21.) The embryo is asleep in the womb as are the dead in the grave; it waits for the light of *this* world as

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they do for that of the next. This comparison of the womb and the grave is very beautiful, since it points to the grave as the birth-place of the resurrection-life.

V. 16. God who gave him existence saw from the beginning his entire development to the end, and only in seeing it beforehand he gave him existence, retaining as the Creator his power over the creature. The Psalmist says, "In thy book all the days were written." This is an expression borrowed from human habits: men write down their thoughts when they wish to remember things, (Mal. iii. 16; Ps. lvi. 9,) or plan a scheme. In applying this language to God, he intends thereby to denote the certainty and unchangeableness of the knowledge of God.

V. 17, 18. The Psalmist once more (cf. v. 6) bursts forth into devout astonishment; he contrasts himself—so entirely dependent on God—with the Almighty, and feels his inability of continuing the thought of the designs of God respecting man any further. He sinks into a profound meditation, but on coming to himself,* finds that he has by no means finished thinking.

V. 19—22. He pauses and completely overwhelmed with feelings of adoration towards so marvellous a God, indignantly separates himself *from the fellowship of those* who sin against him.† He is conscious that love to God is sincere in proportion to our hating those who have fallen to so low a state that they are actually capable of hating God. This passage explains the hatred of the Psalmists towards their enemies: they are *their* enemies because they are *the enemies of God.*

V. 23, 24. Looking up to the Omniscient, he finishes his self-examination. He possesses the consciousness of his ability to stand before the Lord, and knows that the path which deviates from God's is the path of misery. (Ps. xxxii. 10; xxxiv. 22; xvi. 4.) He feels, however, that the grace of God alone can keep him in his happy frame of mind, and sustain him in his hatred of everything that is opposed to God, and therefore superadds to his confession the prayer that the Lord would graciously keep him in the narrow way which is eternal; while it is said of the way of the ungodly that it shall perish. (Ps. i. 6.)

* If the interpretation of Geier and most commentators be preferred, viz.—"Meditantem somnus obruit, evigilantem mox tui meditatio subit," cf. Ps. lxiii. 7.

† "The Psalmist is so overcome by the infinite glory of the state of mind to which he has risen, and with which he would not part on any consideration, that his overflowing and melting heart is at that moment only capable of regarding opposition from without with abhorrence."—*Ewald.*

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PSALM CXL.

A PSALM of David, similar in matter to those which he composed during the persecution of Saul. Cf. Psalms XXXV. liv. lvi. lvii. lxiv.

1 TO the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.
2 Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man:
Preserve me from the violent man;
3 Which imagine mischiefs in *their* heart;
Continually are they gathered together *for* war.
4 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent;
Adders' poison *is* under their lips. Selah.
5 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;
Preserve me from the violent man;
Who have purposed to overthrow my goings;
6 The proud have hid a snare from me, and cords;
They have spread a net by the wayside;
They have set gins for me. Selah.
7 *But* I say unto the LORD, "Thou *art* my God:
Hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.
8 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.
9 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked:
Further not his wicked device;
Lest they exalt themselves. Selah.
10 *On* the head of those that compass me about,
Let the mischief of their own lips fall.
11 Let burning coals fall upon them:
Let them be cast into the fire;
Into deep pits, that they rise not up again.
12 An evil speaker shall not be established in the earth:
Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow *him*.
13 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted,
And the right of the poor.
14 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name:
The upright shall dwell in thy presence.

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PSALM CXLI.

THIS psalm contains several passages the interpretation of which is perhaps more doubtful than those of any other psalm, and accordingly, contrary views as to its contents are likely to arise. Our translation, which is close to the original, points immediately to the memorable escape which David granted to Saul in the cave at Engedi. (1 Sam. xxiv.) It is singular enough that this psalm, like David's earlier ones, has the peculiarity of the alternation in the singular and plural numbers. (*See* ad. Ps. xi.) It should not be overlooked that Psalm cxlii. falls into the same period.

David has escaped from peril of life, and so magnanimously conquered the great temptation of his heart to requite evil with evil, that even Saul could not withhold his admiration, (1 Sam. xxiv. 18—20;) but he is still exposed to danger as before, nor knows himself secure against temptation; he lifts therefore his hands in prayer, assuring himself of the gratefulness of his prayer to God, (v. 1, 2.) Conscious of his inclination to requite evil with evil, he prays for strength to persevere in innocence in word and deed, (v. 3, 4.) He states as a proof of his sincerity, that he regards the sufferings to which he is exposed as the righteous visitations of God, and has on that account no ill feeling towards his enemy, (v. 5, 6.) He now courageously implores speedy deliverance from the fierce persecution, (v. 7—10.)

A PSALM of David.

1 LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me:
Give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.
2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as* incense;
And the lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.
3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth;
Keep the door of my lips.
4 Incline not my heart to *any* evil thing,
To practise wicked works with men that work iniquity:
And let me not eat of their dainties.
5 Let the righteous smite me,—*it shall be* a kindness:
And let Him reprove me,—*it shall be* an excellent oil,
which shall not break my head:
For yet my prayer also *shall be* in their evil doings.*

* *I. e.* Though they continue in evil doings, "I will pray." The linguistic justification of this rendering is based on Zech. viii. 20; Prov. xxiv. 27.—*Ewald*, § 619.

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6 When their judges* were set free in rocky places,
They heard my words; for they were sweet.
7 Our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol,
As when one plougheth the land and draweth furrows in it.
8 But mine eyes *are* unto thee, O GOD the LORD:
In thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.
9 Keep me from the snares *which* they have laid for me,
And the gins of the workers of iniquity.
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
Whilst that I withal escape.†

V. 1, 2. David intimates by these expressions, that sacrifices, especially those of incense, with their fragrant odours, were *symbolical prayers* offered to the Lord. He compares, (Exod. xxx. 7; 1 Kings xviii. 29; 2 Kings xvi. 15; Mal. i. 11,) therefore, his prayer to the burning of incense, and to the meat-offering. The former was offered every morning and evening, the latter in the evening only. He hopes that it might be as grateful to God as fragrant incense.

V. 3, 4. Those who know the manly heart of the heroic David will readily understand the great temptation to which he was exposed, of failing in his duty towards a persecutor such as Saul, if not by active exertions, at least by unguarded language: but he conquered his stout heart. He was one of those heroes of whom Solomon says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; *and he that ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city." (Prov. xvi. 32.) This demands no less our admiration than his humble self-knowledge, which prompts him to pray for further grace from *heaven*, to be kept from unguarded speech, and from sinking to the level of the wicked.

V. 5, 6. David humbly regards his troubles as Divine correctives, although they were occasioned by his enemies. (Cf. ad. Ps. xxxviii. 2—6.) In the disastrous day of his exit from Jerusalem, he could reply to the deriding language of Shimei, "Let him curse, *because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David.*" (2 Sam. xvi. 11.) The verses under consideration testify no less of his faith in the providence of God than of his deep sense of guilt, which enabled him to discern in all his visitations the paternal hand of love. (Heb. xii. 7.) The *Righteous* of verse 5, is God himself.‡ The reason

* It militates against the rendering of Luther, "They were thrown" *over at* or *into the clefts* of the rocks (*Ewald*, 2d. edit.,) which has been adopted by modern interpreters, that the most natural rendering of בִּידֵי would be "from the rock."

† Or, "Let the wicked fall into their own nets together, whilst I escape."

‡ This view, which was already propounded by so early a writer as Amyraldus, has recently, and, as it seems, independently, been advocated by

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of David's making this confession is, that there is nothing more calculated to quench personal vindictiveness towards our enemies, than to regard them as instruments in the hands of God. David adopted that course with reference to the abuses of Shimei, and was able to persevere in prayer under the abuse of Saul. (Ps. xxxv. 13; cix. 4.) It was this which enabled him to display that magnanimous act to which he refers in verse 6; he refers not only to the act, but also to his *words* which accompanied it. They are preserved 1 Sam. xxiv. 12—16, and bear so powerful an impress of passionless tranquillity that even Saul exclaimed, "*Thou art more righteous than I!*"

V. 7—10. He now bewails his misery and prays for deliverance. In Psalm xxii. 15, he said that his bones were sundered. In the same manner he says in this place of himself and his associates, that their bodies are torn as ploughed and furrowed land, that their bones are scattered and their life brought to the borders of death. Gins and snares are repeatedly set for them. But the tried servant of God has sufficiently experienced that his God "taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong." (Job v. 13.) The last clause of his prayer is brightened *by hope*.

PSALM CXLII.

THE occasion of this psalm of complaint has been stated ad. Psalm lvii.

1 AN Instruction of David; a Prayer when he was in the cave.
2 I cried unto the LORD with my voice;
With my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.
3 I poured out my complaint before him;
I showed before him my trouble.
4 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
Then thou knewest my path.
In the way wherein I walked
Have they privily laid a snare for me.
5 I look on *my* right hand, and see,
But *there is* no man that will know me.
Refuge faileth me;
No man careth for my soul.

Maurer with reference to Isaiah xxiv. 16. The absence of the article before עֲרִים is no objection in a poetical composition. If "the righteous" be regarded as a man, cf. Prov. xxvii. 6; Eccl. vii. 5.

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6 I cried unto thee, O LORD:
I said, thou art my refuge
And my portion in the land of the living.
7 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low:
Deliver me from my persecutors;
For they are stronger than I.
8 Bring my soul out of prison,
That I may praise thy name:
The righteous shall compass me about,
When thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

V. 2, 3. Peril so evident and imminent as that in which we find David, is sufficient to check the courage and destroy the faith of many an experienced Christian; to such an extent that he shall be at a loss to ease himself of his grief by prayer. But David enjoys perfect composure of mind, and unbosoms his cares before the Lord.

V. 4—6. He contrasts his limited vision with the unlimited vision of God, who not only sees the path when it is lost to man, (Ps. i. 6,) but knows a way of escape from the midst of death. (Ps. lxviii. 21.) This thought composes his soul in circumstances which, were he to be guided by his own observations, would certainly make him fall a prey to despondency, for he sees himself completely surrounded by nets and snares. He looks in vain to his right for a human defender. (*See* ad. Ps. cxxi. 5.) There were, indeed, his attendant warriors, but even if they had been courageous and powerful enough to try their strength against that of Saul, it was not David's intention to settle his contest with the king in a *sanguinary* manner. He clings entirely to the Lord, whom he calls his refuge and his *very own* portion in the land of the living, *i. e.* on earth.

V. 7, 8. Almost overwhelmed by his desperate position, he cries anew for help. Yet even in extreme peril like this, David can remember that the faith of the small band of believers is allied to his destiny. He prays, therefore, for his own deliverance, also for their sakes, and with a view to an increase of their faith.

PSALM CXLIII.

THE Psalmist struggles in a state of deep depression previous to offering his prayer to attain the mastery over the consciousness of his guilt, which rises like a separating wall between God and him-

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self, (v. 1—3,) but derives strength from remembering the former manifestation of Divine mercy, (v. 4—6.) He prays now for deliverance, (v. 7—9,) and for grace to be preserved from transgressions, to which frail man is *so* liable in great trouble, (v. 10—12.)

A PSALM of David.

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications:
In thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness.
2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant:
For in thy sight shall no man living be justified.
3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul;
He hath smitten my life down to the ground;
He hath made me to dwell in darkness,
As those that have long been dead.
4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me;
My heart within me is desolate.
5 I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all thy works;
I muse on the work of thy hands.
6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee:
My soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.
7 Hear me speedily, O LORD:
My spirit faileth:
Hide not thy face from me,
Lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.
8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning;
For in thee do I trust:
Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk:
For I lift up my soul unto thee.*
9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies:
I flee unto thee to hide me.
10 Teach me to do thy will;
For thou *art* my God:
Thy spirit *is* good; lead me into the land of uprightness.†
11 Quicken me O LORD, for thy name's sake:
For thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble,
12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies,
And destroy all them that afflict my soul:
For I *am* thy servant.

* Tholuck renders, "For I disclose my soul to thee."
† *I. e.* "Uprightness," *i. e.* "straight, even."

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V. 1—3. The faithfulness of God in the fulfilment of his promises and his righteousness (which term in the Old Testament includes also his mercy, *see* ad. Psalm v. 9,) are the two Divine attributes on the exercise of which the granting of our prayers depends. Who would expect it from that righteousness which *rewards man according to his deserts?* since even those who call themselves the *servants* of God (v. 12) are at best *unprofitable servants?* David knows this, and strives from the outset for the attainment of childlike confidence and the consciousness of pardon, (Psalm lxv. 4;) for all our righteousness is like a filthy rag when looked at in the light of Divine purity. (Isaiah lxiv. 6.) The apostle confirms the same truth. (Rom. iii. 20.) So Job confessed, "I know it so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand." (Job ix. 2, 3.)

V. 4—6. We know that the heart of David was not stoically unfeeling in its struggles; he was a man, and had human passions. He was not ashamed to confess his depression. He did not give way to it, however, without resistance, and anxiously looked for the *means* to attain to a mastery over himself, and grasped that glorious weapon of defence which is furnished by the meditation of the former works of God in the guidance and deliverance of his people. (Ps. xxii. 4, 5.) To this means he joined *prayer*, and he *did* pray indeed. His soul was looking out for God, as land parched and burst by the drought of summer waits as it were with open mouth for the blessing of rain.

V. 7—9. He prays like one who is experienced and tried in the school of prayer. By asking God to show him the way wherein he should walk, he intimates his conviction, that no human power could point out the way of escape out of the net of affliction, wherein he lies a captive. On that account he has not put his trust in man. For why should he confide in those, who if willing, have not the ability to deliver? The useless expression of our grief to man breaks the strength of the soul. David trusts only in *his God*, and to him he *discloses* his grief.

V. 10—12. Heavy affliction blinds our eyes, and renders us liable to have recourse to wrong means, and to stumble, and especially to forfeit Divine favour by our impatient murmurings. The Psalmist prays for the guidance of the *good Spirit* (Neh. ix. 20) of God along with outward assistance. In the measure as we lose the sense of our strength in seasons of adversity, we derive comfort from the belief that there is a power without and above us, which will come to the aid of those who themselves are poor and helpless. (2 Cor. xii. 9.) The Psalmist's soul is deeply humbled and prostrated; he prays for deliverance for God's *mercy* and *righteousness'* (*see* ad. Psalm v. 9) sake, and flees in his utter help-

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lessness to the Lord his refuge—like a servant who has no means of defence of his own, but is obliged to look to his master for weapon and protection. (Psalm cxvi. 16.)

PSALM CXLIV.

This psalm is called a psalm of David, because it consists for the most part of Davidic sentences, (verses 1, 2, 3. 5, 6, 7. 9.) Also verses 12—15 are probably derived from some composition of David.* The last mentioned verses suggest the view that this psalm was composed for the comfort of the people, and that the people are speaking in it. The manner in which the name of David is mentioned in verse 10, shows that the entire authorship does not belong to him.

The Psalmist having trustfully praised the Lord as his rock, (v. 1, 2,) points to the indigence of helpless man, (v. 3, 4,) and prays for deliverance, (v. 5—8.) He repeats his prayer, (v. 9—11,) and implores the return of the prosperity which was formerly enjoyed by the kingdom of David, (v. 12—14,) and concludes with a blessing on the people, (v. 15.)

A *PSALM* of David.

1 Blessed *be* the LORD, my rock,
Which teacheth my hands to war,
And my fingers to fight:
2 My goodness, and my fortress;
My high tower, and my deliverer;
My shield, and *he* in whom I trust;
Who subdueth my people under me.
3 LORD, what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him!
Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!
4 Man is like to nothing;
His days *are* as a shadow that passeth away.
5 Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down:
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.
6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them:
Shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

* This appears from the crowded character of the language and the stiff connection with אֲשֶׁר verse 12.

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7 Send thine hand from above;
Rid me, and deliver me out of great waters,
From the hand of strange children;
8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
And their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood.*
9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God:
Upon a psaltry *and* an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.
10 *It is he* that giveth victory unto kings:
Who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.
11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children,
Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
And their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood:
12 That our sons *may be* as plants
Grown up in their youth;
That our daughters *may be* as corner columns,
Cut like *those of* palaces;
13 *That* our garners *may be* full,
Affording all manner of store:
That our sheep may bring forth thousands
And ten thousands in our pastures.
14 *That* our oxen *may be* strong to labour:
That there be no breaking in, nor going out;†
That *there be* no complaining in our streets.
15 Happy *is that* people, that is in such a case:
Yea, happy *is that* people, whose God *is* the LORD.

PSALM CXLV.

AN easy-flowing song of praise. It is the effusion of a grateful heart. Verses 1—7 denote the strong impulse of the Psalmist to engage in the praise of the Lord. Verses 8—13 praise the mercy and goodness as well as the glory of the government of God, (v. 14—20,) his mercy to the afflicted and his real children, and to a certain extent to every living thing. Verse 21 reverts to the thought of verses 1, 2. The Jews remark on this psalm, which is indeed the "Our Father" of every grateful heart, "that he is a

* Tholuck renders, "And their oaths are perjuries."

† Tholuck renders, "That our princes may be established, that there be no breaking in of war, nor going out to war, that there be no shouting in our streets."

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son of the world to come, who is able to pray this psalm three times a day from his heart."

A *PSALM* of Praise of David.

1 I will extol thee, my God, O King;
And I will bless thy name for ever and ever.
2 Every day will I bless thee;
And I will praise thy name for ever and ever.
3 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And his greatness *is* unsearchable.
4 One generation shall praise thy works to another,
And shall declare thy mighty acts.
5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty,
And of thy wondrous works.
6 And *men* shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts:
And I will declare thy greatness.
7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness,
And shall sing of thy righteousness.
8 The LORD *is* gracious, and full of compassion;
Slow to anger, and of great mercy.
9 The LORD *is* good to all:
And his tender mercies *are* over all his works.
10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD;
And thy saints shall bless thee.
11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,
And talk of thy power;
12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts,
And the glorious majesty of his kingdom.
13 Thy kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,
And thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations.
14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall,
And raised up all *those that be* bowed down.
15 The eyes of all wait upon thee;
And thou givest them their meat in due season.
16 Thou openest thine hand,
And fillest every living thing *with* mercy.
17 The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways,
And holy in all his works.
18 The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him,
To all that call upon him in truth.

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19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him:
He also will hear their cry and will save them.
20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him:
But all the wicked will he destroy.
21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD:
And let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

V. 1, 2. The Psalmist, profoundly conscious that the Lord is infinitely worthy to receive the praise of men, states his resolution to praise and extol him, not in a transient manner only, but every day of his life.

V. 3, 4. Human virtue and greatness have their limits, where spots appear and poverty begins; but the greatness of God is unsearchable and inexpressible. Human glory has its limits even in *time* (*i. e.* the present life,) and frequently reaches not to the succeeding generation, but the glory of God endures throughout all generations.

V. 5—7. The Psalmist resolves to make the majesty of God and his wondrous works which outreach the stretch of human thought, the themes of his songs of praise. He contemplates thereby not only his own gratification (for peace is the blessed consequence of praise,) but that of others, and determines to invite them that they might all join in his praise.

V. 8, 9. It is his desire to testify of the *majesty* of God, but speaks of his *grace*, *longsuffering*, and *mercy*. (Exod. xxxiv. 6.) The reason is that these are the attributes of God which enable men to make his majesty the object of their praise. Dismantling the majesty of God of its terrors, they render it the object of our rejoicings. The mystery of his goodness can only be revealed to rational beings, *i. e.* to men, and among these only to such *whose eyes are opened*, *i. e.* to the pious. (*See* ad. Psalm xxxiii. 1.) But his goodness is everywhere manifest, and the spacious folds of his mantle of mercy furnish a hiding-place to every living creature.

V. 10—12. The minds of the pious perceive the traces of goodness which the Almighty has stamped on all his creatures; *they*, therefore, may say, "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord." Since, however, the mouths of the pious alone can give an audible expression to that praise, the Psalmist immediately adds, that it belongs to the saints of God to testify of his glory among the children of men. The kingdom of God will be the *last* on earth, and in *this* respect, at least, maintain its superiority over the kingdoms of this world, even on the supposition that its glory did not excel in other respects. All the kingdoms of this world are only *struggling* to become like that perfect empire, and shall ultimately be dissolved and perfected in it.

V. 13—16. The Psalmist having praised goodness and mercy

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as the noblest qualities of the majesty of God, now notices that it is chiefly manifested in the condescension of God to the condition of the afflicted and the humble. This thought expands the range of his vision; he is constrained to admire the condescension of the majestic Ruler, which condescension in his government of the world extends to the meanest and most insignificant of his creatures. Men call it *natural* instinct which prompts all creatures to seek their food, and praise *nature* for having provided for the several necessities of all. The eye of the Psalmist, however, sees the *living God* engaged in daily spreading the table for every living creature. As the eyes of children look up to the hands of their parents, so the eyes of every creature look up to the stretched-out hand of God, which has for thousands of years daily distributed innumerable gifts, provided to all *their* meat *in due season*, (Ps. civ. 27,) and never grown empty. Men with unmoved hearts speak of all these things as of a work of natural *necessity*, but the Psalmist sees mercy in them, and this fills his soul with adoration.

V. 17—20. The earth and everything on it fell within the range of David's vision when he spoke of the goodness of God. Nor did he overlook the fact, that as those that fear the Lord have *eyes* for beholding his goodness, so do they alone possess *open mouths* for getting perfectly satisfied with his goodness. (Ps. lxxxi. 11.) Though the Lord makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and on the unjust, so that none goes away with empty hands, yet what are the blessings of sunshine and rain when compared with the glorious blessings which the Lord bestows upon them that fear him? The Church of his saints is the theatre where the marvellous wisdom and love of God are most gloriously revealed. Hence the apostle declares that by these revelations "the manifold wisdom of God becomes known unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places." (Eph. iii. 10.) His mercies are *conditional*. He reveals himself to those only that call upon him, not only with their lips but with their hearts in sincerity. He grants only "the desires of them that fear him," for they only ask *according to his will*, (1 John v. 14,) and subjecting their will to his, pray, "*Thy* will be done." He saves and preserves them, for though they must often succumb on earth, he will at least "destroy the wicked," (*see* ad. Ps. civ. 35,) but "deliver them from every evil work, and preserve them unto his heavenly kingdom," (2 Tim. iv. 18,) yea, "their light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

V. 21. The Psalmist will not suffer his mouth to be silent with the praise of so glorious a God, but woe, if not every man will join in that praise for ever and ever!

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PSALM CXLVI.

A TEMPLE psalm. The people resolve not to put their trust in men, however potent they may be, (v. 1—5.) They praise the sceptre of righteousness and mercy with which God, who has created all things, governs the world, and has established his eternal throne in Zion, the kingdom of God, (v. 6—10.)

1 PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise the LORD, O my soul.
2 While I live will I praise the LORD:
I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.
3 Put not your trust in princes,
They are the sons of men, in whom *there is* no help.
4 His breath goeth away, he returneth to his earth;
In that very day his thoughts perish.
5 Happy *is he* that *hath* the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope *is* in the LORD his God:
6 Which made heaven, and earth,
The sea, and all that therein *is:*
Which keepeth truth (faithfulness) for ever:
7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed:
Which giveth food to the hungry.
The LORD looseth the prisoners:
8 The LORD openeth *the eyes of* the blind:
The LORD raiseth them that are bowed down:
The LORD loveth the righteous:
9 The LORD preserveth the strangers;
He relieveth the fatherless and widow:
But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.
10 The LORD shall reign for ever,
Even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.
Praise ye the LORD.

PSALM CXLVII.

A TEMPLE psalm of the people, composed soon after their return from the captivity, when Jerusalem rose once more from the dust, (v. 2. 13, 14.)

The Psalmist praises in glowing and sweet strains the mercy of

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God, which is revealed to the humiliated nation and his humble worshippers as the mercy of the *Almighty*, (v. 1—6.) He celebrates the paternal love of God to the most helpless of his creatures, and his peculiar delight in the meek, (v. 7—11.) He comforts the rebuilding city with the assurance of Divine aid, praises the universal traces of God's omnipotence in nature, and glories in the thought that the Almighty King has favoured Israel above all the nations of the earth, (v. 12—20.)

1 PRAISE ye the LORD:
For *it is* good to sing praises unto our God;*
For *it is* pleasant; *such* praise is comely.
2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem:
He gathered together the outcasts of Israel.
3 He healeth the broken in heart,
And bindeth up their griefs.
4 He telleth the number of the stars;
He calleth them all by *their* names.
5 Great *is* our Lord, and of great power:
His understanding is infinite.
6 The LORD lifteth up the meek:
He casteth the wicked down to the ground.
7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving;
Sing praise upon the harp unto our God:
8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds,
Who prepareth rain for the earth,
Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.
9 He giveth to the beast his food,
And to the young ravens which cry.
10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse:
He taketh not pleasure in the bones of a man.
11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him,
In those that hope in his mercy.
12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem;
Praise thy God, O Zion.
13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates;
He hath blessed thy children within thee.
14 He maketh peace *in* thy borders,
And filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.
15 He sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth:
His word runneth very swiftly.

* Or, "For it is a precious thing."

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16 He giveth snow like wool:
He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.
17 He casteth forth his ice (hail) like morsels:
Who can stand before his cold?
18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them:
He causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.
19 He showeth his word unto Jacob,
His statutes and his judgments unto Israel.
20 He hath not dealt so with any nation:
And *as for his* judgments, they have not known them.
Praise ye the LORD.

V. 1—6. The Psalmist animates himself and others to engage in the praise of the Lord, by the consideration that that exercise is no less beneficial to the heart than it is a comely duty. He expresses his gratitude for the manifest mercies of God, as displayed in the return of the scattered nation of broken-hearted Israel to their native borders, in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the binding up of the wounds of the nation. He only who telleth the infinite host of the stars and calleth them all by their names could have performed such mighty works. The Lord delights especially in uplifting the low and debasing the high.

V. 7—11. He now praises in lofty strains the condescending goodness of God, who in a wondrous manner prepares the rain in the clouds, so that even the high mountains must yield food to the beasts; who with paternal solicitude is mindful of the young ravens, which, deserted by their own parents,* cry to the Lord of heaven as to their only helper. He chiefly delights in those who, unable to boast of their own strength, *fear* him and hope in *his* mercy.

V. 12—20. The Psalmist now addresses Zion, which is privileged to call this God, *her* God. He bids the inhabitants to look hopefully upon the new but weak beginnings in their land, promising strength to the city, blessings to her inhabitants, peace and prosperity to the land within its borders. He seeks to raise their confidence by again pointing to the irresistible strength of Divine Omnipotence. The words of God become his executing servants on earth. He scatters snow like woolly fleeces, the hoarfrost like ashes, and hail like morsels: he contracts the air into intolerable frost: he commands his wind to blow and all is melted. All these things are great blessings of his goodness and Omnipotence: but the greatest blessing of Israel is that they have a God who in his condescending love has given them a clear revelation of his will, so that they need no longer ask, Who shall go up to heaven, who

* This has given rise to the German idiom of "raven father" and "raven mother," as descriptive of unnatural or cruel parents.

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shall go over the sea and bring unto us the word of God? The word is now nigh unto them, in their mouths and in their hearts, that they may do it. (Deut. xxx. 12—14.)

PSALM CXLVIII.

Psalms cxlviii. and cl. seem to be placed at the conclusion of the Psalter, as if it were intended that their perpetually recurring, "Praise ye," should form a many-voiced echo of the praise which fills every preceding psalm. Everything is invited to praise: nothing is too high, nothing too low. The Psalmist begins (v. 1) with the loftiest heights, descends (v. 7) to the lowest depths, addresses the elements and kingdoms of nature, reascends to man, addressing every rank and order of society, and finally turns to that people which is the priesthood among men, as man is the priest among the creatures on earth. The song of the youths in the fiery furnace seems to be an echo of this psalm.

1 PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise ye the LORD from the heavens:
Praise him in the heights.
2 Praise ye him, all his angels:
Praise ye him, all his hosts.
3 Praise ye him, sun and moon:
Praise him, all ye stars of light.
4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,
And ye waters that *be* above the heavens.
5 Let them praise the name of the LORD:
For he commanded—and they were created.
6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever:
He hath made a decree which *they* shall not pass.
7 Praise the LORD from the earth,
Ye dragons,* and all deeps:
8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours;
Stormy wind fulfilling his word:
9 Mountains, and all hills:
Fruitful trees, and all cedars:
10 Beasts, and all cattle;
Creeping things, and winged birds:

* Or, "Ye sea-monsters."

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11 Kings of the earth, and all people;
Princes, and all judges of the earth:
12 Both young men, and maidens;
Old men, and children:
13 Let them praise the name of the LORD:
For his name alone is exalted.
His glory *is* above the earth and heaven.
14 He also exalteth the horn of his people,
The praise of all his saints;
Even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.
Praise ye the LORD.

V. 1—6. The Psalmist begins with the heavens above: with the twofold hosts of the Lord, the armies of his angels and the shining planets and stars without number. They are placed in different regions of the heavens (for God is enthroned high above the lower heavens, Psalm civ. 3,) and he therefore addresses *all* the heavens, and then the clouds which move along the skies. It has been stated already (Ps. cxlv. 10) how these appeals to inanimate creation are to be understood. Though every creature is full of the praise of God, yet it belongs to man alone to give an audible expression to their praise. The Psalmist indicates that the unchangeable laws and decrees according to which those countless worlds pursue their course, denote the object of their praises.

V. 7—14. Wisdom and Omnipotence, worthy to be praised, are also scattered over the earth, and the depths of the sea abound with them. The phenomena of nature are his messengers: the animal and vegetable kingdoms down to their lowest stages bear the impress of the goodness and Omnipotence of God, and are therefore a song of praise on his glorious attributes. But *man* is chiefly invited to praise the Lord. It devolves upon him, as the priest of nature, above every other creature: every rank, every age, and every generation, have abundant cause for engaging in this praise. As man is peculiarly blessed as the race of priests in the midst of inanimate creation, so is Israel peculiarly blessed as the race of priests among men.

PSALM CXLIX.

WHILE Psalms cxlviii. and cl. invite all beings to praise, Psalms cxlvii. and cxlix. address the newly established community at Jerusalem. They are invited to praise the Lord for his past goodness

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towards them, (v. 1—5,) and new victories are promised to them, (v. 6—9.)

1 PRAISE ye the LORD.
Sing unto the LORD a new song,
And his praise in the congregation of saints.
2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him:
Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
3 Let them praise his name in the dance:
Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.
4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people:
He will beautify the meek with salvation.*
5 Let the saints be joyful in glory:
Let them sing aloud upon their beds.
6 *Let* the high *praises* of God *be* in their mouth,†
And a two-edged sword in their hand:
7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen,
And punishments upon the people;
8 To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
9 To execute upon them the judgment written:
This honour have all his saints.
Praise ye the LORD.

V. 1—5. The Psalmist invites the people to recommence the praise of the Lord as it were with new courage and a new tongue. (Psalms xl. 4; lxxxix. 2.) All men belong to God, for he made them: but Israel is doubly his, and in a twofold sense the work of his hands. (*See* ad. Psalm xcv. 6.) Israel therefore shall sing praises to him, which accompanied by the manifold sound of festive instruments are to sink the more deeply into their hearts. He delivered his people from great misery: let all that belong to that people sing his praises in the festive assemblies, as well as on their lonely beds.

V. 6—9. Their mouth was full of praise on account of their past deliverance: but hostile nations rose up once more against them. (Neh. iv. 7.) They now took comfort from the promises of the prophets, (Isaiah xlii. 10—13,) and indulged in the hope that they should ultimately triumph over all their adversaries, and treat them as the idolatrous nations of Canaan were treated by the command of God. (Cf. Neh. xiii. 1—3.) These promises have a spiritual meaning, (cf. ad. Psalms ii. and cx.) so Zechariah pre-

* Or, "He gloriously helpeth the wretched."
† Or, "Let their mouth exalt the Lord."

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dicts that there shall be no more the Canaanites in the house of the Lord of hosts, (Zech. xiv. 21;) but the less spiritually inclined people thought more of victories to be achieved with drawn swords in campaigns, such as the crusaders undertook against the oppressors of the holy land: "With psalms in their mouths, but the whetted sword in their hands."

PSALM CL.

THIS psalm, like Psalm cxlviii. opens with an invitation of praise addressed to the hosts of spirits in the heavens, depicts the jubilant joy of the many instruments in the sanctuary, and ends with the all-embracing invitations into which the entire Psalter resolves itself—"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah."

1 PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise God in his sanctuary:
Praise him in the firmament of his power.
2 Praise him in his mighty acts:
Praise him according to his excellent greatness.
3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:
Praise him with the psaltery and harp.
4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance:
Praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
5 Praise him with the loud cymbals:
Praise him with the high sounding cymbals.
6 Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD.
Praise ye the LORD.

THE END.

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